Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

James Stewart — The Situation and Struggle in Northern Ireland

Document:

Communist Party of Great Britain — On the Distribution of Income and Wealth

Discussion:

John Thompson — Notes on the "Dialectics of Nature"

Barbara Ruhemann — Inflation and Marxist Theory

(disegno di Gal)

The Italian Elections of June 1975

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

Volume 19, Number 8

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The front cover was designed by Pat Cook. The drawing by GAL is from *Rinascita*

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Editorial Comments

IN an atmosphere of furious anti-Communism the Italian Communist Party and the Italian Left won a glorious victory on June 15. The world reactionary press betimes had ominously warned of revolutionary threats, betimes proclaimed that the Italian Communists had "gone respectable" and lost all authority amongst the workers. When the electoral figures revealed their stupidity, they hastened to say that the Italian Communists were at least quite unlike Communists in other countries.

Last year the referendum on divorce showed that important changes were taking place in Italy. The June 15 regional, provincial and local elections revealed that something had quite definitely changed, and that the new stage of the democratic and anti-fascist revolution, and the new elements of socialism, of which the Party had spoken at its 14th Congress at the beginning of this year, were indeed no fantasies.

In the Regions the Communist Party vote advanced 5.6 per cent over the previous regional elections in 1970; in the Provinces by around six per cent. Together the left Parties increased their vote by some three million votes.

SOME FACTS OF THE ADVANCE

The Christian Democrat Party saw its vote fall to its lowest previous level (1946). The unliberal Liberal Party lost almost half its votes.

In the Regions the Communist Party (PCI) vote rose from 27.9 per cent of the total poll in 1970 with 200 seats to 33.4 per cent with 247 seats. We have to remember that the PSIUP, a left Socialist Party, which had polled 3.2 per cent in 1970 had become part of the CP by 1975.

The Socialist Party (PSI) which polled 10.4 per cent in 1970, won 12 per cent in 1975 with its seats rising from 67 to 82.

The Christian Democrats (DC), who in 1970 had won 37.9 per cent of the regional votes with 287 seats now received 35.3 per cent with 277 seats.

The total number of seats rose from 690 in 1970 to 720 in 1975.

If an estimate is made of the total national vote by adding to the votes polled in the *Regions* with normal statute the votes in the *provincial* elections of the three Regions with special statute (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sicily and Sardinia) the Communist Party received a total of 11,264,417 votes (32.4 per cent), the

(*PCI*)—*Communist Party percentage gains in the 15 regions.*

(*PSI*)—*Socialist Party percentage gains in the regions.*

(*DC*)—*Christian Democrat Party percentage losses in the regions.*

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Socialist Party 4,188,338 (12.1 per cent) and the Christian Democrats 12,351,470 (35.5 per cent).

So the Communist Party has become the largest Party in seven out of 15 Regions and in 34 out of 86 Provinces. It is the leading Party in great cities like Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Rome, Turin and Venice. "A qualitative leap of historic dimension", wrote Alfredo Reichlin in *Rinascita* (June 20). Its vote rose particularly sharply in some cities (Turin 8.9 per cent, Rome 8.9 per cent, Cagliari 8.1 per cent, Brescia 7.7 per cent, Milan 7.4 per cent, Padua 7.5 per cent, Florence and Bologna 6.5 per cent, Naples 6 per cent).

WHY THE SUCCESS?

It was clear that in Italy's deep economic and social crisis the anti-Communist shouts of Fanfani and the Christian-Democratic Right-Wing and other reactionary trends were hopelessly bankrupt. Stirred by the crisis, urgently looking for answers, large sections of the people turned to the Left, not the Right, and above all to the Communists.

The Communist answer to the crisis was given in principled theoretical as well as concrete immediate terms. Very broad sections of intellectuals were moved by the Party's theory, defence of liberty, and practical example of effective non-corrupt local government.

A whole section of the youth had the vote for the first time and it is calculated that more than half of them voted for the Communist Party.

Enrico Berlinguer, General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, interviewed by Henri Alleg from *Humanité* a week after the elections (June 22), stressed the significance of the fact that, unlike in previous parallel situations, the conditions of serious crisis had led to a turn to the Left not Right. In the first place, he said:

> "broad masses of the people understood what were the real causes of the crisis and who were really responsible. They had learned in the course of their struggles, that even amidst full-scale crisis, demands and improvements *could* in struggle be won. A number of very broad and united struggles carried out by working people *had* won important social advances.
>
> "But, secondly, our Party always puts forward proposals and lines of solution, not only in general terms, but concretely, specifically, in relation to daily problems of economic and social life. The working people, but also artisans, small shopkeepers, and even small business people, were very sympathetic to different Communist proposals (for instance in relation to investment in agriculture, transport, housing, education, modernisation of industry) and Communists seemed to them to be 'really serious people' ".

The Communists, Berlinguer stressed, had given an exceptionally good example of effective non-corrupt public administration in crying contrast to the Christian Democrats. But the Communists had insisted that to make a radical change in this direction, broad popular support was needed:

> "We always insisted that in order to get rid of 'malgoverno' (corrupt government), the unity of all popular forces was necessary. We need to co-operate (in the specific Italian situation) not only with the Left (in the traditional sense), but also with the Catholic forces organised inside and outside the Christian Democratic Party".

AND WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

What will the consequence of the June elections be on the level of national Italian politics, Enrico Berlinguer, was asked. It is evident, he replied:

> "that so spectacular an advance will have effects that will not be felt immediately. It is clear that the struggles of the working people and popular masses will draw new strength from it.
>
> "It will give a new impulse to the process of unity between socialists and communists, and, more generally, of the unity of all democratic forces. But we do not believe that all this will be easy. Those who were defeated at the elections will put up stiff resistance to any general political change, and multiply obstacles of every sort.
>
> "Up to now (June 22) the Christian Democrat leaders have shown no signs of modifying their policies, but I am sure that *within* Christian Democracy there will be much reflection on the disastrous results of past policies, particularly those of the most recent period.
>
> "These are, of course, internal questions of the Christian Democrats, and we will not interfere in them, though we cannot look on passively. *Our* struggle will develop throughout Italy amongst the masses, and this can have a positive influence even within Christian Democracy".

Alfredo Reichlin wrote in *Rinascita* of June 20 on "The Communist Party and Italy". He stressed the need for a real answer to Italy's economic crisis, to the degeneration of public life, and to the attacks on democracy, the necessity for defending the independence of the Italian nation.

But this, he argued, necessitated the development of broad democratic unity. Such unity to combat the crisis must not only be worked for as some sort of government realignment, but *within* society, in our manner of running public affairs, in the structures of our mass organisations, in the

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nature, breadth and cohesion of the united movement of the people.

That is why, he said, the electoral victory will not cause us to lose our heads, nor make us arrogant nor over-bearing. We will continue to aim, not at a "left alternative", but at a "democratic alternative", with the political perspective of collaboration and mutual understanding of the popular forces of communist and socialist inspiration with the popular forces of Catholic inspiration, as well as of groupings in the democratic and lay tradition.

A SPLENDID DEMONSTRATION

The splendid June demonstration against the James White Abortion (Amendment) Bill brought together for the first time wide sections of the Women's Movement and the Labour Movement. 20-30,000 women and men marched in one of the biggest turnouts seen for years, united in their determination to defeat this Bill, to maintain safe, legal, abortion, and women's right to choose when and if they have children.

The demonstration was a clear illustration of the strength which can be mobilised behind the demands of women when unity can be developed around a matter of common concern.

The calls made at the culminating Hyde Park Rally for the campaign to continue are important, not only for securing advances on this particular issue, but because they show the developments among women who are now beginning to recognise that their demands are linked with the general political struggle of the working class.

Those who are currently engaged in the campaign to combat the propaganda of Healey, Wilson, Thatcher and others, and to defeat their attempts to impose massive cuts in social expenditure and wage restraint, should welcome and give full support to this continuing campaign. Growing pressure on MPs to ensure the Bill is decisively defeated in Parliament, and mounting pressure to extend NHS facilities as called for in the Lane Commission Report, are an important part of the campaign to reject the package deal aimed at reducing inflation and solving the crisis at the expense of living standards. The extend to which this is grasped will be reflected in the support for, and representation at, the National Abortion Conference which has been called for October 18/19 in London.

Valuable work was done up and down the country by the organisations and individuals who sponsored the demonstration. They worked together organising public meetings, leaflet distribution, collecting signatures to the petition. Their support and solidarity won support and solidarity from wide sections. Communist Party members made their contribution and the very full coverage given by the *Morning Star* was much appreciated.

This work must continue, be strengthened and extended, and the basis laid for the same sort of unity around the related issues of pay and job opportunity, education and childcare facilities. It is part of our struggle to develop broadly based mass action and create conditions which will open the way for fundamental change.

MARX—ENGELS COLLECTED WORKS. VOL. 3.

The separate volumes of the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* are, as anticipated, appearing in a steady flow of some four volumes per year. Vol. 3[1] appeared at the end of May and it is almost certain that Vol. 4 will appear before the end of the year.

This is a considerable achievement of the greatest value in assisting the spread of understanding of Marxism in the English-speaking countries.

The first two volumes gave us fascinating pictures of the two great founders of Marxism —their family and social backgrounds, their youthful, intellectual and philosophical struggles against religous, idealist and reactionary outlooks and their advance to a revolutionary-democratic standpoint.

This new volume contains some of their most important early writings indicating their further advance to scientific socialism and communism, their elaboration of some of the main principles of historical materialism and their proclamation of the need to end capitalism as the pre-condition of human advance and liberation and of the decisive role of the working-class in bringing this about.

Among them are texts which have been published before but which have been carefully re-translated, and others which appear for the first time in English.

They include (amongst many other writings) Marx's profound essay—*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*—which criticises Hegel's concept of the Absolute, his confusion of thinking and being, his

[1] Karl Marx—Frederick Engels, Collected Works. 3. 1843-44, Lawrence & Wishart. £3.00.

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concept of the State as the institution which resolves and overcomes the contradictions of "Civil Society" and emphasises instead the class role of the State in capitalist society as the defender of private property.

In addition there is the now well-known *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* which contains not only Marx's criticisms of the theories of bourgeois economists but his specific class approach to the concepts of "estrangement" and "alienation" as features of the life of workers under capitalism and not as abstract and non-class categories as in Hegel and Fuerbach.

The *Manuscripts* already stress the decisive role of production in the social process and of the social relations of production—both basic to a historical materialist approach.

Not so well known is the brilliant *On the Jewish Question* which places the question of Jewish emancipation in the wider context of the emancipation of all human beings from the economic and social oppression of capital.

In this and in the *Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* (a separate article from the one mentioned at the outset) Marx treats the social basis of religion and attacks those like Bruno Bauer and other "left Hegelians" who saw the criticism of religion as the central task. "*Man makes religion*, religion does not make man" he declares in this latter article, which also deals with the relation of philosophy to politics and the need for a complete social revolution not a partial, political one leaving the foundation of the system intact.

Along with other important writings by Marx this volume contains a number by Engels. These include his early article on economic questions—*Outline of a Critique of Political Economy*, his "*Letters from London*" describing the economic, political and social structure of Britain for German readers and various articles for the Chartist Press describing the political movements and struggles of the time in France, Germany and Russia for British readers.

KUGELMANN—FRIEND OF MARX AND ENGELS

Anyone who has studied Marxism will have come across and probably read Marx's "Letters to Kugelmann".

Who was this man, what was his place in the German socialist and workers' movement, and, especially, what were his connections with Marx and Engels and with Marxism?

These questions are answered in a comprehensive biography—"Louis Kugelmann—Doctor and friend of Marx and Engels"[2] which has just been published in the GDR.

Louis Kugelmann, doctor of medicine, friend of Marx and Engels, active participant in the 1848 revolution in Germany, member of the Communist League, of the First International, delegate to its Congresses in Lausanne (1867) and The Hague (1872), member of the German Social Democratic Party from its foundation in Eisenach in 1869, was born in 1828 and died in 1902.

He became interested in the writings of Marx and Engels through reading the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848/49) which was edited by Marx and had Engels on the editorial staff.

He was most enormously impressed by Volume I of "*Capital*" (published in 1867), describing it as "a magnificent work, amongst the greatest intellectual products of all time, which enlightens the present generation and from which a new cultural epoch will be dated."

Although a busy general practitioner, he found time, along with his wife, Gertrude, to make a systematic study of it. Marx, following a request by Gertrude as to how to read "Capital", advised her as follows:

"Begin with the chapters on 'The Working Day', 'Co-operation', 'The Division of Labour and Machinery' and, finally, 'Primitive Accumulation'."

Kugelmann worked prodigiously to break "the conspiracy of silence" with which Volume I was met in Germany, trying to secure reviews in the bourgeois and academic press.

He was a close personal friend of Marx and his family and of Engels and corresponded with both of them over a period of more than 30 years—with Marx from 1862 to 1874, and with Engels until the latter's death in 1895—also with Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht and other leaders of the German Socialist movement.

Marx wrote him 59 letters—all of them of great theoretical importance, the most famous of which are those of July 11, 1866, which deals with his theory of value, and of April 12, 1871 on the Paris Commune, in which he speaks of the need "to smash" the bureaucratic-military state machine.

Kugelmann bequeathed the letters to

[2] *Louis Kugelmann: Eine Biographie des Arztes und Freundes von Karl Marx und Friederich Engels* by Martin Hundt, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, GDR.

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Kautsky and the German Social Democratic Party. Kautsky, however, suppressed 13 of them, and it was Lenin who in 1907, published a Russian edition of the complete correspondence for the first time.

While paying tribute to Kugelmann's great services to Marx and Marxism and to the German workers' movement, Hundt is critical of a number of theoretical and political weaknesses on Kugelmann's part. He sought continually to tear Marx away from his practical political work in the First International in order to complete "Capital", for he exaggerated the immediate revolutionary impact it would make. He also adopted a negative attitude to the Paris Commune.

Nevertheless he was an interesting and important figure. This is not only a biography of an outstanding contemporary of Marx and Engels, but one set against the background of the development of the German workers' movement in the 19th century.

CUBA A TO Z

When the Portuguese people are struggling toward Socialism after half a century of fascism, it is useful to study the history of other oppressed nations who have thrown off dictatorship and enjoy the benefits, as well as some of the problems, of socialist democracy.

Cuba is such a country and a book recently published in French called "*Cuba Socialiste de A à Z*" (Socialist Cuba from A to Z) gives such an opportunity.[3] It is written with an obvious passion for the subject by two French Communists, André Carrel, the editor of *L'Humanité Dimanche*, and Georges Fournial, a member of the Party's central committee and responsible for Latin American affairs.

Under different letters of the alphabet, the authors deal concisely with a whole range of topics from the drinking habits of the Cuban people to their revolutionary tradition, from Jose Marti, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara to bats, crabs and grapefruit.

Of particular interest is the entry under P for party, an outline history of the Cuban Communist Party which finally grew out of three organisations: the 26th July movement (the date of the attack of the Moncada barracks in 1953) led by Castro, the Popular Socialist Party (formed in 1943 out of the first Communist Party of Cuba which was founded in 1925) and the revolutionary students of the revolutionary directorate of March 13 (the date of an unsuccessful attack on the presidential palace in 1957). It is fitting for the book to appear this year as 1975 marks the first party congress since its formation in 1965.

This year is also International Women's Year and although the authors could not avoid the remark that the beauty of Cuban women is legend, the section on women does reflect the many advances made by the revolution. It lists those gains as well as showing how far there is to go, dealing with the constant need to be critical of attitudes toward women, especially self-critical inside the party, and with the struggle against "machismo".

This kaleidoscope of Cuba manages to hold together the most diverse aspects of Cuban life and make them all accessible; the importance of democracy and the first election experiment in 1974; the lessons of a political fight on culture and education; the relationship between slavery and the sugar business; slave uprisings and the collective fight against racism that is still going on—a welcome example of popular Marxist journalism.

URBANISM IN FRANCE

A further publication concerning urban planning and redevelopment to reach us from France[4], examines political and economic realities in a major provincial centre—Lyons. The author, in an earlier work on Paris[5], had already argued that recent changes in the French capital are directed in the long run to the advantage of "state monopoly capitalism". In Lyons, as in Paris, he now finds that the citizenry is being banished to housing estates, dormitory suburbs and elsewhere, to make way for profitable city centre redevelopment. On the face of it, it might seem that the forces at work here were primarily local, and that the landowners and *bourgeoisie* of Lyons were themselves the principal instigators and beneficiaries. But a detailed study of the actual circumstances shows that in Lyons, as in Paris, the direction of social and economic life is now less and less local, and more and more determined by and for big finance-capital, whose power and strategy transcends regional and even national boundaries.

[3] A. Carrel, G. Fournial—*Cuba Socialiste de A à Z*, Editions Sociales, Paris.

[4] Jean Lojkine: *La politique urbaine dans la region Lyonnaise*: Mouton: Paris, 1974 38 F.

[5] Jean Lojkine: *La politique urbaine dans la region Parisienne;* Mouton; Paris, 1973.

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Lyons, which once boasted as her city architect the great pioneer of modern town planning—Tony Garnier—now sees his lofty ideals submerged in the interests of the cartels and the finance houses. In Britain, we see the same thing—but no longer without protest. In every city there are now springing up civic societies and groups eager to defend their local heritage against the office blocks and the fly-overs. It daily becomes more necessary for the working-class (the principal victim, first of industrial-capital's "urban explosion"; now of finance-capital's "urban renewal") to give serious leadership and socialist perspective to a popular movement which otherwise stands at risk of misdirection, impotence, and disillusionment. That leadership and perspective has much to gain from research like that of Lojkine and his colleagues—even more were similar research to be undertaken here.

Another French contribution to the theory of "urbanism" has recently been published: *Les Promoteurs Immobiliers* by Christian Topaiov (Mouton, Paris, La Haye, 1974). It is an investigation into the economics of building in modern France, but will amply repay the specialist reader in Britain. Some basic propositions of Marxism are employed in a praiseworthy attempt to elucidate the laws which underlie the seeming chaos of capitalist speculation in urban land, building, and housing finance.

SOCIALIST PRICE THEORY AND POLICY

The well-produced book on *Socialist Price Theory and Price Policy*, by Béla Csikós-Nagy, published this year by the publishing house of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Akademiai Kiadó, Budapest, price £6.80) contains much of interest and importance for any student of the economics of socialism, although it is by no means a 'popular' work. The book is a substantial one, running to close on 400 pages, and the author speaks with unusual authority and experience as Chairman of the Hungarian Board for Material and Prices for a considerable number of years—administrative experience which includes the crucial price-reform of 1968 accompanying the so-called 'reform of the economic mechanism'. As Hungarian representative on the committee of the International Economic Association he is also well acquainted with 'western' literature and discussion on the subject. His first work on price-theory (distinctly different in tone from this one) appeared as far back as 1958; and only two years ago there appeared in English-translation a work of his on *Socialist Economic Policy*.

Unfortunately a reader of the book is not greatly assisted by the translation, which in places drops into unfamiliar choice of language and expressions. No doubt, the translators are competent scholars of the English language; but as regards *usage* it offends against the principle that translation (or at least revision of it) should be by someone for whom the language being translated into, is the mother-tongue (examples are not only odd usage of prepositions and of the definite article, but, rather baffling expressions like 'dead work' and 'live' for living and stored-up labour, or 'labour-force' in place of labour-power, 'quotient' for proportion; also words like 'substitution-ability' and use of 'historic' where historical is intended). This makes it hard to tell whether obscurity in much of the theoretical exposition is due to defects of translation or is in the original. But *some* at least of the difficulty of understanding the argument must be attributed, apparently, to defective exposition: for example, Chapter 2, of Part 2 about so-called 'volume-oriented', 'value-oriented' and 'efficiency-oriented' planning which is particularly hard to follow.

IDEAS AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

A reader who may find it sometimes hard-going, and be put off accordingly, should, however, be encouraged to skip and persevere; for he will find much of value in the sequel to ponder over, as regards both ideas and practical experience. On the basis of socialist experience the author takes it as almost axiomatic that there is commodity production under socialism (as distinct from full 'communism'), and that accordingly market-forces and consumers' demand will necessarily play a role, and hence price-policy viewed as an instrument of control and "a stabiliser in the market mechanism" ("the interest of socialist society requires that production and goods exchange should be organised in accordance with social utility and price should become a signalling system of economic decisions"). He gives a balanced and sensible (if brief) review of the Soviet price-discussion of the 50s. On the value-question he himself comes down on the side of 'prices of production', on which he is interesting, as also on the circumstance in which 'market prices' must also play a role. He shows keen awareness of the

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importance of 'public goods' and allowance for so-called 'external effects'; and he appreciates the positive function of mathematical, so-called 'linear', programming (hence of what are called 'shadow-prices') as an aid to planning. He boldly seizes the nettle of 'productivity', and 'profitability' as alternative criteria of enterprise-performance.

There are useful informative accounts of actual procedures for planning prices from 1959 onwards, such price-plans including long-term and medium-term as well as short-term plans; a fairly lengthy discussion of whether, and why, the price-*level* in socialist countries will tend to fall or to rise over time; and a summary account of differences amongst Hungarian economists in discussions of the extent of price-control in preparation for the price-reform and economic reform of 1968. The concluding Parts IV, V and VI cover respectively pricing of producers' goods, including agricultural, factory costs and retail prices, and foreign trade prices. These include a mass of factual detail which may be too much for all but specialists. Students of the CMEA (economic council of the east-European socialist countries) will be interested, however, in detailed information about financial and price mechanisms in use here (as well as discussion of them) in the last 80-odd pages —although they will probably find this part the most difficult for us 'westerners' to follow.

CONFERENCE ON ENERGY POLICY AND NORTH SEA OIL

Following the last and very successful National Aggregate Science Conference on "Science and the State of the Nation" held in Manchester last Easter, the Communist Party's Science and Technology Committee has decided that the next conference in the Autumn should be on the topic of "Energy Policy and North Sea Oil".

The conference will take place in Glasgow, at Gallacher House, over the weekend 25th and 26th October, 1975. It will focus on the issue of Britain's indigenous energy supplies, in particular that of North Sea Oil, in the context of the overall energy situation, and on the technical, economic, and political issues involved.[6]

[6] All comrades who think they might be able to contribute anything in this field, whether or not they are able to attend the conference, should contact the Secretary, Science & Technology Committee, c/o 16 King Street, London, W.C.2, from whom further details of the conference may be obtained.

MARXISM TODAY—INDEX FOR 1974

Indexes for Vol. XVIII (1974) are now available. Owing to increased costs we are having to make a charge of 3p each for these. Send stamped addressed envelope and 5½p in stamps to "Marxism Today", 16 King Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2E 8HY.

APPEAL FOR TRANSLATORS

We would be grateful for voluntary help with translation of articles from Marxist theoretical journals. We need translators with knowledge of Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, French, Russian, Serbo-Croat and other East European languages. If you can help us please let us know your languages and whether you are conversant with any special areas of study (such as philosophy, sociology, politics, natural sciences, etc.).

Concluded from page 256

Changed conditions do not alter the validity of the theory, only the specific results according to the specific case analysed.

It is much easier for us today; Marx would have been delighted to have such statistics as the Census of Production to work from. Economists in the socialist countries have even found a way to apply Marx's basic equation to the socialist production process and are using it to perfect the science of socialist planning[2]; and Marxists will agree that the changes from capitalism to socialism are vastly more far-reaching than any that have yet occurred, or are likely to occur, within capitalism.

[2] See: *The Use of Mathematics in Economics.* Ed. Nemchinov and Nove, in particular the article by O. Lange, pp 193 ff. Also: O. Lange, *Introduction to Econometrics,* Pergamon Press, 1966, pp 214 to 224.

Marxism and the Family

(Selected contributions from a "Marxism Today" discussion)

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The Situation and Struggle in Northern Ireland

James Stewart
Assistant General Secretary, Communist Party of Ireland

On radio, on television, in the press and from the halls of Westminster there echoes a dangerous myth throughout the length and breadth of Britain: that the current crisis in Northern Ireland is one based on religious differences, a remnant of the 17th century religious wars which shook Europe at that time, and is now being re-enacted in this small corner of Western Europe in the second half of the 20th century. In addition to this we are asked to believe that the role of British Governments since 1969 to the present day has been one of "peace maker", reluctantly, but with pure altruism, sending in the British Army, an entourage of administrators, and enacting repressive legislation, to keep two warring religious factions apart.

A very comfortable theory for the British ruling class, but one that is very far from the truth. The roots of the present crisis in Northern Ireland are based on the relationship of Ireland to Britain; on the fact that the British ruling class would not, and still will not permit the Irish working people to take the road to independence.

Ireland's Relation to Britain

The struggle of Ireland's people for self-determination stretches back to feudal times, and it is an historic fact that Ireland was England's first colony. It is not the purpose of this article to trace and examine the content of the myriad struggles launched by the people of Ireland against their imperialist oppressors, but to make an examination with understanding of the present complex political situation in Northern Ireland it is necessary to at least go back some way into the history of Ireland's relation to Britain, and to examine in general terms the content of that relationship.

Throughout the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, the British ruling class, who governed Ireland directly from Westminster was faced with an ascendant national liberation movement which drew its support from the national bourgeoisie, farmers big and small, small businessmen, professional people and the working class. Faced with this movement, and the added danger through the influence of the Marxist teachings of Connolly that the working class could move from the position of being a section of this alliance for national independence into one of leadership, thus turning the struggle towards the goal of socialism, British imperialism had to adopt policies to stem such development.

It must also be said that they feared another danger, which is ever present in the minds of the British ruling class, i.e. that the national independence movement in Ireland would join forces with the British working class and working people for their mutual emancipation from the domination and exploitation of monopoly capitalism.

The Device of Partition

Thus imperialism used the device of "Partition" to subvert the national independence struggle of the Irish people and to maintain its interests in Ireland. There are two interesting factors of major importance regarding the device of "Partition":

1. It represented a retreat by imperialism faced with an ascendant national liberation movement, in having to grant national independence to 26 of the 32 counties which compose Ireland.
2. The establishment of the Northern Ireland statelet (composed of six counties) under British sovereignty was to be used by imperialism not only to prevent the complete liberation of Ireland's people, but as a spring-board for a counter-offensive to regain in the future control over the entire island; and as a useful reserve of reactionary forces: the Unionists, to be used in alliance with right wing forces in Britain to subvert the advance of the British working people towards socialism.

The device known as "Partition" was in reality an expedient—a compromise solution—forced on the British ruling class in order to prevent the Irish national-liberation movement from attaining its objective of an independent Irish Republic. The only way by which British imperialism could subvert this development was to create an alliance for itself within Ireland. That alliance became known as the Unionist Party. Its leadership was based on the landed aristocracy whose political, economic, social and cultural interests had been closely linked with those of the British ruling class since the 17th century. But it was also able to bring within its orbit businessmen small and large, big and small farmers and workers

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The Unionist Party

That such an anachronistic class alliance could be formed and remain in being to operate in the interests of British imperialism until 1968 was made possible because, on the one hand, British imperialism was the leading imperialist force in the world at that time, controlling a huge empire, dominating world markets, and, on the other hand, the British ruling class were able to rely on the organ of the "Protestant" landlord class—the Orange Order—to use religious differences amongst the Irish people as a political weapon.

In content this meant that the landlord leadership of the Unionist Party were able to say to the industrialists, who, because of previous policies of the British ruling class, were in the majority "Protestant" and based in the North Eastern six counties of Ireland—"Where are your markets if you take the road to independence?". To the farmers they said "Where will you sell your produce?", and to the workers in the shipyards of Belfast and the large linen industry within these six counties—"Where will your jobs be if we lose our markets?"

This factor added to the religious differences, historical prejudices and fears of Protestants in relation to their Catholic fellow countrymen, laid the foundation for the ideology of Unionism as we know it in Ireland today—an ideology which is objectively pro-imperialist and which from its conception contained within it fascist concepts and actions.

The successful development of this Unionist Party meant that British imperialism was able to create a division in Ireland. That division is known today as "Partition", with two states—the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The main tragedy of this division was not the physical division of an island but the division of a people. It is this division of the Irish working class which has led to the present crisis and suffering for our people in Ireland today, particularly in Northern Ireland.

Weapons of Discrimination

With the establishment of Northern Ireland in 1921, the Unionists were given by the British government of the time, and by successive British governments afterwards, the right to govern Northern Ireland as they wished, so long as they did not interfere with the interests of British Big Business. The result was that we had the creation of the instrument of "*political-religious sectarianism*" as a weapon whereby the Unionist Party could maintain political control and obliterate all effective political opposition. This was done first of all through the instruments of the state—the law courts, the police and their auxiliaries, the B-Specials (the private legal armies of Unionism), the Special Powers Act and its major weapon—internment without trial. In addition to this, because of high unemployment, discrimination in jobs on a politico-religious basis was used to divide the working class and keep the people divided; the same also applied to housing.

In elections, to ensure that Unionists controlled majorities, even in areas where they were in the minority such as Derry City, there was gerrymandering of electoral areas, plural voting for businessmen and the denial of the vote to all but rate-payers in local government elections. Through local governments the Unionists were able to widen the corruption of large sections of the people. Contracts for road construction, house building etc, won the avid support of "Protestant" small businessmen.

The crude weapon of discrimination as it was used in Northern Ireland developed the ideological base of Unionism and led to the current belief amongst large numbers of the "Protestant" section of the working people that they are superior to the "Catholic" section and that equal opportunity for both represents a threat to their interests.

From the Twenties to the Sixties

Events however do not stand still, and what was an expedient for imperialism in the 1920s found itself, because of the developments which were taking place in Ireland and on a world scale, no longer suitable in the 1960s. Fascism had been defeated after World War II, the Soviet Union no longer stood alone as the only Socialist country—a world Socialist System was being built, there was an upsurge of national independence movements, there were democratic movements and peace movements throughout the world. Imperialism on a world scale and British imperialism in particular had to answer this change in the balance of world forces, re-organising both politically and economically. New forms appeared: the European Economic Community, the growth of the large monopoly concerns and the multi-nationals. Of course Ireland was affected by all of these changes which were taking place on a world scale. In Northern Ireland encouraged by the British governments the Unionist administration was engaged in a policy of attracting British and other foreign monopolies to establish branches in Northern Ireland. They did this by granting these concerns factories which were exempt from the payment of rent or rates for periods of 10 to 15 years. In addition to this they supplied these monopolies with capital grants on machinery and low interest loans.

At the same time the profits from these concerns were exported without restrictions *because the Northern Ireland administration had no power over fiscal policies such matters being reserved by the Westminster Parliament under the 1920 Government of Ireland Act.*

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The Effect of the Monopolies

The fact that British and other foreign monopolies were being brought into Northern Ireland through the policies of a Unionist administration laid a basis for the eventual break up of the Unionist class alliance of landlords, large and small businessmen, farmers large and small and workers. The fact is that these monopolies were changing the structure of the economy and either taking over or pushing out of existence the industries, and businesses of many of the supporters of Unionism (those who had firmly believed that, linked to Britain politically and economically, they could be assured of a healthy and permament future).

The growth of monopoly takeover was first of all felt in the late 50s and early 60s in industry. The establishment of the British and American owned man-made fibre concerns (Courtaulds, Du Pont etc.) spelled doom for what had been one of the major enterprises in Northern Ireland—the linen industry. The result was the obliteration of the family-owned linen industry and the loss of 46,000 jobs in textiles in the period from 1930 to 1973. What had started in manufacturing spread to the distributive industry with the coming of the huge chain stores—C & A, Marks and Spencer, Mace, Spar, etc. Once again the Unionist-minded shopkeepers, large and small, found themselves either being taken over by these huge combines or pushed out of economic existence.

The process did not end there because with developments in agriculture the farming community found itself at the mercy of the big monopolies who produced fertilisers, feeding stuffs and farm machinery. In these conditions the small farmer found himself being driven off the land because he was unable to pay the prices for these essential materials and enjoy living standards above subsistance level. In the period from 1950 to 1973 46,000 jobs were lost in the agricultural industry.

For the working class the coming of the monopolies did not solve the question of wide scale unemployment and emigration because the disappearance of many of the old established industries meant that the overall job situation remained the same—averaging 7 per cent of the insured population. From the period 1970 to 1973 106,000 jobs were lost in Northern Ireland's three basic industries: agriculture, shipbuilding and textiles. At the same time the monopolies were attracted to Northern Ireland not only because of government grants but also because average earnings per week were £4 to £5 less for male workers than in Britain.

The Unionists continuing with their policy of discrimination in jobs encouraged the monopolies to site their factories in predominantly "Protestant" areas. But a new feature emerged with the coming of these forms in that they themselves did not operate a policy of employment on a politico-religious basis.

Unionist Divisions

We can see then that the Unionist class alliance resulting from the influx of the monopolies was under tremendous pressure by the mid-sixties from sections of all the classes which composed it. We must put the question as to why a Unionist administration took this course which did not operate in the interests of all of its supporters. It was based on the realities of life, the fact that the relationship of Northern Ireland to Britain was and is a *colonial relationship*—that the "Northern Ireland" government had no control over fiscal policies and thus Northern Ireland was starved of capital investment because of profits being invested abroad by industrialists. Thus the Unionists adopted this line of policy because:

1. The British ruling class wanted it. (What must be remembered, and it is a point seldom made, is that under the relationship of Northern Ireland to Britain *all public money spent in Northern Ireland has to have the approval of the Westminster Government* and thus the money which was spent in grants for free factories, rate and rent free periods was approved by the British Exchequer.)
2. They hoped by doing so to solve the question of economic underdevelopment and wide scale unemployment which ranged from 7 per cent to 12 per cent of the insured population for decades.

The fact that the Unionist Administration had no control over fiscal policy resulted in the situation that they could not take any legislative measures to control the accelerated decline of locally-owned enterprises in industry and distribution, nor could they protect the farming community against the farm supplier monopolists. Hence in this process sections of the Unionist bourgeoisie sold out to the monopolies, became involved as shareholders and directors in their concerns. Brian Faulkner, former Unionist Prime Minister and Chief Executive of the now defunct Assembly, illustrates this point. But under monopoly capitalism there is not a place for everyone in the sun. Thus a division of interest began to emerge within the Unionist Establishment. A division which was exacerbated by developments which had taken place in the Republic of Ireland.

Junior Partners

Broadly speaking the same economic trends had taken place there also. The Fianna Fail Government had long abandoned its policy of developing the Republic of Ireland's economy on an independent basis from British economic interests. The policy of attracting foreign monopolies to establish branches

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in the Republic was pursued on a similar basis as in the North. Therefore, for British monopoly capitalism the economic and political division of the island of Ireland was becoming a redundant solution. New forms were required to meet the new situation. The British ruling class was in the process of establishing better relations with the government of the Republic and for the monopolies the partition of Ireland was becoming an impediment in their drive to exploit both parts of Ireland. Thus we find the political expression of this change being shown in the Lemass-O'Neill meetings, the meeting of Lemass and Wilson, and the O'Neill-Wilson meeting in 1966.

It is no accident that at this time the first forms of right wing Unionism as we know them today started showing themselves, for we had in addition to the economic pressures of the monopolies the clear indication that for British monopoly capitalism there was the need for a rapprochment between the two parts of Ireland.

The indications of future developments were reasonably clear even to the most backward of Unionist politicians, i.e. that British monopoly capitalism required closer economic co-operation between the six and 26 counties of Ireland, that this would involve political co-operation and that the logic of such developments would lead to new political solutions which could involve the re-unification of Ireland in some federal solution where the British ruling class would continue its control over Ireland by neo-colonialist methods, but in which sections of Unionism who were being suppressed by the monopolies would lose both political and economic influence. In other words in political, economic, social and cultural terms this would mean that the Unionist monied-section and the 'Nationalist' rich would form a political alliance in which they would both be the junior partners of British imperialism.

Thus in addition to the economic and social effects which the influx of monopoly capitalism was having on the Unionist all-class alliance, the search for better relations with the Republic of Ireland was striking at the basis of Unionist ideology: i.e. the sectarian division of the Irish people. It is no accident that the birth of Paisleyism is to be dated from 1966 and that the reconstitution of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) took place at the same time; nor is it an accident that in this atmosphere the first sectarian murders, the Malvern Street shootings, were carried out by this force in Belfast at that time.

At the beginning of this century the alliance between British imperialism and Unionism had been based on the illusion (for the Unionists) that it was in their political, economic and social interests. Now by 1966 reality was questioning this assumption and was beginning the divisions within Unionism whereby some forces of that camp were adhering to British monopoly capitalism whilst others were unconsciously challenging it, not in any progressive sense, but by attempting to put back the clock of history.

Struggle for Democratic Rights

In addition to this process another major feature was developing in Northern Ireland, the struggle for democratic rights which became a mass movement in 1968 under the leadership of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. Many people are under the illusion that this was a spontaneous movement which abruptly emerged after the Derry demonstration in 1968. But nothing could be further from the truth than this assumption. First of all, the cause of its development was the lack of democratic rights in Northern Ireland under Unionist Rule. Second, the consistent work done by the Communist Party, the trade union movement and other organisations of the people to expose this position and to change it. Third, it was given impetus when the Republican movement rejected the blind physical force policies of the 1956 period and started to involve itself in mass politics.

The result of all of these features was the birth of a mass movement for civil rights. The Unionist all-class alliance was as we have already seen under tremendous pressures from the monopolies and now came this new demand for democratic rights composed of Communists, Liberals, Nationalists, Republicans, Socialists and Independents. The monolithic Unionist Party was caught in a pincer, the pressures became too much, it split, shattered and started to turn in on itself. This is seen in concrete terms in the struggle for leadership within that Party: the fall of O'Neill from Premiership, to be replaced by Chichester-Clark, to be replaced in his turn by Faulkner. Whilst at the same time, outside the Unionist Party but as adherents to Unionist ideology, in its most fascist form, Paisleyism continued to develop.

In this struggle amongst the Unionist forces two major factors were the determining features in the new alignments which took place. On the one hand we had the impact of the monopolies and on the other differing approaches on how to combat the mass movement for democratic demands. It was this mass movement which proved to be the Achilles Heel of Unionism for it attacked the very basis of the power—coercion and discrimination—and in its demand of equal rights for all struck at the roots of their "Protestant Power" ideology.

Problems within the Civil Rights Movement

Unfortunately at the same time within the Civil Rights Movement elements of the ultra-left such as the Peoples' Democracy, and forces of the Right

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representing the Catholic section of the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia presented the position as purely one of Catholic rights and not as what they were, rights for the entire working people in the North of Ireland. This led to the position where the Unionist Right Wing were able to conduct an ideological battle amongst the "Protestant" section of the working people which prevented the trade union movement from officially working and thereby weakened the class content of that movement. It also meant that the Unionists were able to present the Civil Rights Movement to the mass of the Protestant section of the working people as a "Catholic Rights" movement which was endangering their "privileges", real and imagined, and thus to prevent any significant numbers of them from participating in this struggle on the democratic side.

From its outset the Unionist resistance to the democratic peaceful demonstrations of the Civil Rights Movement took on fascist tendencies, from the use of the RUC Commandoes to baton the demonstrators in Derry City into the ground on October 5, 1968 to the Paisley gangs who stoned and clubbed demonstrations whilst the police looked on. This culminated in the organised pogrom of August, 1969, when the Unionists through the RUC, B-Specials and some of the Right Wing gangs, attacked the anti-Unionist working class areas in Belfast where the Catholic section of the working class were mainly predominant. The objective was to break up and destroy the unity of the forces involved in the mass movement for democratic rights through terror.

This action did not immediately break up or intimidate into inactivity the mass movement for Civil Rights, but it laid the foundations for the disastrous split in the Republican movement into what, in everyday language in Northern Ireland, became the Official and Provisional IRA s. The fear caused amongst the Catholic section of the working class and working people by the burning of homes, injuries, loss of lives led to a demand by sections of the Republican movement for an abandonment of what they described as the "political policies" of the movement and a reversion to adventurist military actions.

British Intervention

Thus a split had been created in the democratic front which was to have serious consequences in the development of the political struggle from '69 onwards. The pogrom caused the direct intervention of the British Government because it could not ignore the fact that a mass movement for Civil Rights existed; nor could it ignore the reality that this attack was endangering its good relationship with the government in the Republic of Ireland, and in addition to this was the factor that amongst the Labour and trade union movement in Britain there was growing support for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland. The intervention was forced because the lid was blown off the Unionist "*garbage can*" and the world at large could see the rotten corrupt regime that Britain had created in Northern Ireland. Thus British imperialism was being isolated on a world scale on the question of Northern Ireland and the requirements of British monopoly capitalism in Ireland as a whole were being put in danger by the actions of the Unionists. It was for these reasons that the British Labour Government intervened politically and militarily. The political intervention came in the form of what became known as the Callaghan 5-point programme of democratic reforms, which did not attack the essence of Unionist rule, but which aimed at appeasing the democratic forces whilst protecting the "status quo" in its objective content. The military intervention took the form of ensuring for the time being that Unionism could not continue with its pogrom. Both actions in the final analysis were aimed at ensuring the protection of the interests of the large foreign monopolies.

But even this limited programme was anathema to the Unionist camp embroiled as it was in the internal struggle of conflicting interests which we have already described. This meant that the pro-monopoly faction of Unionism could not ignore, and in fact was a prisoner, of the ideological essence of Unionism, i.e. "Protestant Supremacy". Thus during this period all sections of Unionism consistently tried to stall and hold back the democratic demands, and by so doing created the basis for a physical force campaign by the Provisionals.

In fact the Unionists of all shades hoped to force the struggle on to such a military plane which they thought they could use to obscure the true nature of the struggle and thus break up the mass movement and thereby isolate the democratic forces from the anti-Unionist section of the working people, whilst defeating any military campaign which the Provisionals might mount, in the same manner as they had dealt with the Republican armed movement in the 1956-62 campaign. However they totally under-estimated the strength of the mass movement for democratic rights and the extent to which the Provisionals could develop in military strength and tactics. Also they underestimated the effect which their actions would create in establishing a basis for the Provisionals amongst the Catholic section of the working people. However, from the intervention of the British Government in August 1969 until the end of June 1970 the major conflict was between the mass movement for Civil Rights with very minor physical force actions being carried out by the Provisionals.

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British Tory Policy

But, when the British Tories were returned to power on June 14, 1970,the position rapidly changed. They had not clearly worked out a policy regarding Northern Ireland and thus adopted the expediency of all-out support for their traditional allies there, the Unionist Party. The role of the British Army changed 14 days later when they went on the offensive accepting the role of propping up the Unionists by means of a military solution. An illegal curfew was declared in the Lower Falls Area of Belfast when the whole area was sealed off by British troops; hundreds were arrested; CS gas shot indiscriminately into working class streets and houses; people injured and a number killed. The result of this and continued British Army repression was to act as recruiting sergeants for those people who believed that physical force methods were the only solution; it created a position where violence was answered by violence; it gave credence to the military campaign of the Provisionals.

The British Tories continued with this type of policy and it reached a new height when in August, 1971, the Unionist Faulkner (backed up by Heath, without whose permission he could do nothing) brought in *internment without trial.* The imprisonment without trial, the arbitrary arrests and the torture of prisoners by the Army and Special Branch, resulted in a mass reaction to it. It helped to consolidate the democratic forces in action. Anti-Unionist MPs had already withdrawn from Parliament, now anti-Unionist Councillors withdrew from their positions, and anti-Unionists resigned from public offices. Alongside this a mass rent and rate strike was organised in anti-Unionist areas as a protest against internment. In essence well over a third of the entire population in Northern Ireland were saying: "We have had enough of the anti-democratic state, we refuse to participate in it any more." Even faced with this situation the Heath Government continued with its policy of propping up the Unionist regime until March 1972, before they finally were forced to the conclusion that a new initiative was required.

It was only after the Derry massacre of 14 Civil Rights demonstrators in January 1972 by the British paratroopers, and the mass demonstration of 100,000 people which followed it in Newry, plus the spontaneous mass demonstrations which took place in the Republic of Ireland, that they suspended the Stormont Parliament, removed the Unionists from office and imposed "Direct Rule" from Westminster. This was done because the British Tory Government had come to realise that the Unionists were no longer a viable weapon operating in the interests of British imperialism, indeed because of their policies and actions and their internal ideological battle they were endangering the interests of British monopoly capitalism in Ireland and its ambitions regarding Britain's and Ireland's membership of the EEC.

"Direct Rule" was not to the advantage of the working people of Northern Ireland because as the National Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Ireland declared at the time: "Direct Rule gives even less democracy to the people of Northern Ireland than they had under the Unionist regime, it reduces the rights of all the people to zero."

A Watershed

At the same time a watershed had been created. The Unionists, a regime that had held power for over 50 years, unchallenged, with its own law courts, its own police force, its own legal private armies, was abruptly deprived of these. No longer did they hold within their hands the legal instruments of repression and discrimination. Suddenly they found themselves with the same legal status as all the other political parties (with the exception of those proscribed under law). And to make matters worse for them, this position had been inflicted upon them by their former allies, the British Tories. The entire Unionist camp was thrown into confusion. Alongside this a political vacuum had been created because British imperialism had not yet created a force with which to replace the Unionists. This was to the advantage of the working people.

But the Provisionals continued with their bombing campaign which has resulted in many civilian deaths, and which the Communist Party of Ireland has consistently condemned as an incorrect tactic, which played into the hands of imperialism and the Unionist camp by keeping the working people divided on sectarian lines through fear. Their actions permitted the Unionists, especially the extreme Right Wing to whip-up sectarian hysteria amongst the Protestant section of the working people and so blind that section to the need for the struggle for democratic rights.

The Provisionals as exponents of physical force forgot the maxim of that well-known militarist, Napoleon Bonaparte: "Never interfere with the enemy when he is in the process of destroying himself", and continued with their bombing campaign. This enabled Craig, Paisley, Taylor and other forces of the Unionist Right (who represented those who wished to turn the clock of history back) to whip-up real fear amongst the Protestant section of the working people and to create the basis for such para-military organisations as the Ulster Defence Association, and the Loyalist Workers' Association whose aim was to destroy the unity of the trade union movement as embodied in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The British Government in imposing "Direct Rule" on the people in Northern Ireland, appointed Mr. William Whitelaw as Secretary of State for

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Northern Ireland. His task was to create a new force which would replace the discredited Unionist Alliance. This force would of necessity have to be a *centerist alliance* which would comprise the pro-monopoly sections of the Unionist Party, and the Catholic section of the *Nationalist* Rich, an alliance which would accept the aims of monopoly capitalism regarding Ireland. This meant in practice that he would have to break up the unity of the united front for democratic rights by winning over large sections of the Catholic middle class, and at the same time he would have to attempt to isolate the Unionist right.

A Dangerous Game

In their carrying out of this policy the British Tories played a very dangerous game. They continued with their military repression playing one section of the working people against the other. This was done by a subtle balance of the use of force—greater repression in the Catholic working class areas than in Protestant; internment of some members of the Unionist para-military organisations as well as Republicans. In this the British Tories used the Provisionals to help create the "centerist alliance" which they envisaged. They did so by continuing with their repressive measures; then in June 1972 giving the Provisionals status by creating a truce with them, followed by manipulating conditions to force the breaking of that truce, and even then continuing talks with representatives of the Provisional leadership. The result of these measures meant that the Provisionals were under the illusion that they were winning the armed conflict. They continued with their bombing campaign which resulted in Bloody Friday in Belfast when 14 people were killed.

This was used to help drive the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), which is ideologically petty-bourgeois, out of the democratic front. It also served to maintain the divisions amongst the working class.

Alongside this the Heath Government presented its political solution—the Green Paper, and then the White Paper which were blue prints for the Sunningdale Agreement. Conservative Government propagandists presented this as the "Irish Dimension", but in actual fact the objective dimension in the Sunningdale agreement was *the British Dimension.*

The question was how to maintain British control over the entire island, with particular reference to Britain's and Ireland's membership of the EEC. The strategy behind Sunningdale was to create an Assembly that would be powerless and which would create the illusion amongst the people in the North of Ireland. in the South of Ireland, amongst the people in Britain and the world at large that there was a democratic assembly and that the British Tory Government had found the solution to the crisis.

Creation of Assembly and Executive

Through the Assembly they hoped to be able to develop and consolidate their pro-monopoly, centerist force from the Faulknerite Unionists, the SDLP and the Alliance Party (a small pro-monopoly Party, based on the Catholic and Protestant middle strata of businessmen and intellectuals). In addition to the powerless Assembly, through the device of establishing a Council of Ireland they hoped to develop the economic and eventual political integration on the basis which monopoly capitalism desired in Ireland. In this they had the open collaboration of the Dublin Government.

The immediate task was the setting up of the Assembly. Elections were called in June 1973. To ensure that the Unionist camp did not dominate the Assembly Britain was forced to hold the elections with re-drawn electoral boundaries and under a more democratic voting system than before, thus the Proportional Representation system in voting (a demand of the Civil Rights Movement) was won. The SDLP emerged from the elections as the largest Party representing the anti-Unionists in the Assembly.

The next stage for the Tory Government was to create an Executive. This *was not elected* but *was imposed* by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—Whitelaw. By giving promises that internment would be ended, the Special Powers Act removed from the Statute Book and the repressive role of the British Army changed, he won the SDLP into agreeing to participate. The Faulknerite Unionists and the Alliance Party, as clearly identified forces with the monopolies, took part. The SDLP had fallen for promises and so abandoned the democratic front, and, in the process, weakened it. The British Tories had not granted the basic demands of the Civil Rights Movement and, in particular, they had adroitly ignored the demand for a *Bill of Rights* which would lay the basis for the ending of the politico-sectarian divisions amongst the working people in general and amongst the working class in particular.

They did not end internment, they changed its name to "detention-without-trial"; far from removing the Special Powers' Act from the Statute Book they renamed it the Emergency Provisions' Act and strengthened its repressive measures, whilst the British Army continued to be skilfully used to keep the working class divided with more repression against one section of the working people than the other.

At the same time as this Tory styled "parliamentary process" was going on violence continued in the form described above and in killings, bombings

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and assassinations which had come from three sources at this time—Provisionals, the Unionist Right Wing and SAS (British Army terror squad). In such an atmosphere working class organisations have difficulty in functioning, their meetings are restricted, their policies buried in the carnage of violence, the para-military organisations start to dominate whole areas, and this was the atmosphere that was deliberately created and used by the British Tory Government with the objective of defeating the democratic forces and creating a *centerist alliance* to serve the interests of British monopoly capitalism.

An Imperialist Policy

In other words, despite their declaration that the Sunningdale Agreement was an "Irish Dimension" and their assertion that they would be only too happy to withdraw from Ireland, the fact is that nothing could be further from the aims of British Big Business. First of all Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are economically very profitable for the huge monopoly concerns. Lower average wages and higher production per capita in Northern Ireland means high profits for Big Business. Second, Ireland is a large island, at its nearest point 19 miles from the British Coast. It is also close to Europe and the EEC countries in particular, and in modern strategic terms is on the East coast of the USA. In addition, there are NATO communications bases in Northern Ireland. So in terms of imperialist political and military strategy—British, EEC and US—there is good reason for British political and military presence in order to subvert any attempt of the Irish working class and working people to take the road to national independence and socialism.

The policies used by British imperialism in Northern Ireland in order to subvert the democratic movement and to develop its *centerist alliance* was, and is, a very dangerous one, full of contradictions. The denial of democracy and the continuance of repression created a violent atmosphere which strengthened the ultra-Right Wing UUUC led by West, Craig and Paisley, as against that of the Faulknerite Unionists. These demagogues were able to combine in their propaganda the discontent being felt amongst the small businessmen, farmers and workers, as a result of the economic takeover of Northern Ireland by the monopolies with the sectarian ideology of Unionism.

A significant blow was dealt to the British Tories' Sunningdale Solution with the return of 11 Right Wing Unionist MPs to the Westminster Parliament in the February 1974 General Election (of the 12 representatives which Northern Ireland sends to Westminster only one was an anti-Unionist). The reason for this disaster can be traced to (1) The growing strength of the UUUC as opposed to the Faulknerites for the reasons described. (2) Because of the disunity in the anti-Unionist forces which had resulted from British Tory policies of repression on the one hand and in winning the SDLP for the Centerist Alliance on the other, and also because of the blind physical force tactics of the Provisionals which created confusion amongst the democratic forces.

Of course the UUUC were quick to seize this opportunity, to capitalise on it and to wage an intensive ideological and political battle amongst the Protestant section of the working people against the Faulknerite Unionists, the Assembly Executive, the democratic movement and the British Government.

The return of a Labour Government to Westminster did not mean a change in policy. Whilst in opposition they had adopted a *bi-partisan* approach on Northern Ireland with the British Tories. In government they continued with this policy which in essence meant that they were conducting Tory policies. Internment was continued, in fact increased and army repression went on.

The Ulster Workers' Council

On May 14 the Assembly met to decide whether they would ratify the Sunningdale Agreement or not. From an ostensibly new force on the Right came the declaration that, if the Assembly did, a "general strike" would be called the next day. This new organisation described itself as the Ulster Workers' Council. It was, as far as Right Wing Unionism was concerned, to be the successor of the Loyalist Association of Workers which had been established to smash the Irish Congress of Trades Unions and had become defunct. It had no "grass roots" organisation, no branches, no elected leadership. It was in fact a front for the para-military organisations of Right Wing Unionism. In its previous formation as the LAW organisation it reflected the attempt by the Right Wing Unionist businessmen and large farmers to maintain support for Unionist ideology and policies amongst the Protestant section of the working class. But, the UWC and the para-military organisations which in reality controlled it—the UVF, UDA, Red Hand Commandoes and Ulster Freedom Fighters—were not and are not under the direct control of the Paisley-Craig-West right wing Unionist Alliance.

The Right Wing of Unionism is not a homogeneous force; there are class differences within it and the para-military and UWC reflect the class differences between themselves and the business-farmer alliance of Paisley-Craig-West. They are composed of workers from the Protestant section of the working-class—industrial and unemployed—who still cling to the basic Unionist ideological concept that they are in some way superior to the Catholic section of

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the working class and that their interests are not in common, but in conflict. This leads them onto a Right Wing position which leads in turn to fascist-type policies and actions.

Not a Strike but a Lock-Out

The UWC called a "general strike" of workers for May 15 should the Assembly decide for Sunningdale. It did so. On British television, radio and press and in the mass media in Northern Ireland we were told that such a *strike* took place. What happened was not a *strike*. It was a *lock-out*, enforced on the working class by terror, by tactics that were worthy of Hitler's brownshirts. On Thursday May 15, despite the call at Harland and Wolff's Shipyard in Belfast 90 per cent of workers were in work, in Short's Aircraft factory the turn out for work was normal, and the picture was the same throughout industry in Belfast. Outside Belfast in the vast majority of factories work continued as usual.

We know that normally when an industrial dispute takes place, whether it is official or unofficial, meetings are called and votes are taken. There is only one enterprise where there is evidence that a meeting was called, and that was in Belfast's shipyards. It is interesting to examine this. Two meetings were in fact held, the first mustering only 50 workers, the second estimated about 1,000. At the second meeting only 100 voted in favour of "strike" action. But this was followed by organised intimidation. Flying squads of thugs, some armed, toured the ship-yard and threatened the workers. This pattern developed throughout Belfast.

The trade union movement through officials and shop stewards tried to stop this. But the managements did nothing. The British Army, which the ruling class propagandists claim to be acting as a *peace force* for *law and order*, did nothing to interfere with these para-military gangs, instead they were out in force with road blocks in the anti-Unionist areas, searching, arresting and harassing people. There was simply no question of British soldiers or the police or anybody being used to protect those who wanted to work.

When a genuine workers' strike takes place does the BBC usually, immediately open up its studios to the spokesmen and provide special programmes for them, giving publicity to their tactics and objectives? Normally what the BBC does is to put on the air political pundits who "analyse" strikes, but who are in fact opposed to *the particular strike*. This was not the case during the UWC action. It was as if the Ulster Workers' Council had a hot line into the BBC. At one stage the BBC gave the phone number of the Ulster Workers' Council to those who wished to receive *essential work passes from the UWC*. Here could be seen the influence of the Northern Ireland BBC controllers who were Right Wing Unionists in ideology and anti-trade union and anti-working class.

In the electricity industry the media dramatised the power situation. Here it must be pointed out that the majority of workers did in fact remain in their work and a meeting of shop stewards had rejected the stoppage call. One feature that came out clearly in relation to this industry was that the discrimination in jobs, practised by the Unionists for 50 years, did give them a base in the Belfast power stations amongst key electricity workers which they utilised to the full.

Alongside the role played by the mass media we find that the employers in the main acquiesced or openly collaborated with the UWC, to the extent that they went to UWC headquarters to receive passes and in some factories locked the workers out. This collaboration reached its peak with the CBI pressurising the Labour Government to settle with the UWC.

The reaction of the political parties in Northern Ireland to the enforced stoppage shows that the leadership of the Northern Ireland Labour Party moved from a position of burying their heads in the sands to one of support. The Social Democratic and Labour Party approached the question by demanding repressive measures. The Paisley-Craig-West faction moved from a position of tacit support to one of attempting to take over the leadership of the situation. The Faulknerite Unionists first of all opposed the action, but collapsed under the pressure of the lock-out and lack of support from the British Government. The Alliance Party in its statements and actions consistently opposed the operation.

Labour's Bi-Partisan Policy

From the time the first call was made, the Communist Party of Ireland steadfastly opposed the stoppage, seeing the aim of the UWC as being one of attempting to establish a state in Northern Ireland where all opposition to Unionist ideology would be stifled and which would in essence lead to the establishment of a neo-fascist regime.

From the outset the British Labour Government, following its bi-partisan policy which in essence is Tory policy on Northern Ireland, refused to act in a positive way. Thus the call for the right to work which was made by the official trade union movement was not given the support one would have had the right to expect from a Labour Government. Indeed, during the period from the call that was made for a march back to work on Tuesday, May 21, the para-military organisations which were, in fact, the component parts of the UWC, were permitted to throw up barricades to seal off working class areas and make it virtually impossible for workers to return to work. On May 20 in Belfast UDA per-

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sonnel seized and burned a number of buses, thus ensuring that all public transport was taken off the roads, a further method of making it more difficult for workers to get to work.

When the march back to work did take place on the 20th and the lock-out was breached by the unions, the mass media immediately stated that it was a "flop" and continued their service as a propaganda machine for the UWC. But it was noticeable that in Belfast more shops were open on that day and the following day and more workers in factories. This explains the reason why the UWC forces—the UDA, UVF and other Right Wing para-military organisations—seized the oil refineries and took over the distribution of petrol in areas they controlled.

Outside Belfast the only area where they had any significant control was Larne. Here the myth that the UWC represented working class interests was exposed through the personage of one of their leaders, a Councillor who owned the only garage that was allowed to stay open; the only fleet of mini-busses which was permitted to operate; and the only fleet of freight lorries which were working. Indeed the fact that workers in such towns as Ballymena, County Antrim, well-known as a stronghold of Unionism, were still working, caused a gang of UDA men to go there and murder and wreck in an attempt to close down the factories and shops there.

In all we can say that the credibility of the UWC was built up through massive intimidation, collaboration from the mass media and top civil servants, the acquiescence of the employers and the refusal by the British army to give protection to the workers who wanted to work; plus the inaction of the British Labour Government of Harold Wilson. Thus the UWC were able to move from a position where their support was drawn from the para-military organisations and where the stoppage was enforced by wide-scale intimidation into one of gaining open collaboration from wide sections of society in Northern Ireland.

The important feature about the UWC lock-out is that the British Government permitted the UWC to organise, they allowed them to consolidate themselves, they permitted them to gain credence, and in so doing destroyed their own Assembly Executive, because the Faulknerite Unionists could not remain united under this pressure. In other words they underestimated the effect of Unionist ideology. In their attempt to discredit mass working class activity by putting forward the UWC neo-fascist actions as an example of it and so preserve their centerist alliance, they allowed the most rabid sections of Unionism to take the centre of the political stage.

West-Craig and Paisley who had not supported this action at its outset were quick to jump on the bandwagon and attempt to take its leadership; they certainly succeeded in reaping its political harvest. Here in essence was the conflict between those sections of Unionism who wished to turn the clock of history back to those days before the interests of British monopoly capitalism conflicted with their class interests and those forces of Unionism who were in agreement with the monopolies. This factor British imperialism ignored and as a result sacrificed its Assembly Executive, broke up the centerist alliance of Faulknerite Unionists, SDLP and Alliance Party, abandoned its Council of Ireland, and put itself back to almost the same position that the British Government faced when "*Direct Rule*" was first imposed in March 1972.

Only the Right Wing Gained

No section of the working class or working people gained anything from the UWC Lock Out, but the

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politicians of right wing Unionism. The UUUC used it to strengthen the credibility of their alliance, and to attack both the Centerist forces and the Democratic forces. One would have thought that the British Labour Government would have drawn the lessons from this debacle and abandoned the bi-partisan policies which in reality were the policies of the Heath Tory Government. These policies by their resistence to the democratic demands of the Civil Rights Movement and the continuation of repressive measures had in fact strengthened the extreme right of Unionism at the expense of imperialism's desired Centre, thus "Direct Rule" was continued without the facade of an elected Assembly. However, the Right Wing Labour Government "Direct Rule" team in Northern Ireland under Mr. Rees as Secretary of State, refused to abandon these policies and continued to intern loyalists and republicans without trial, hand-out vicious jail sentences in special courts where the right to trial by jury was denied, and use troops to harass the civilian population in anti-Unionist areas.

It was under these conditions that the Provisionals continued with their bombing campaign, and indeed escalated it by attacks in English cities. Such actions were disastrous as they obscured for the British people what the real needs of the working people in Northern Ireland were, and far from breaking the bi-partisan policy through the creation of pressure from the trade union and labour movement on the Wilson Government, prevented such a campaign being mounted and played into the hands of the most reactionary forces in Britain and in Northern Ireland—those who wished to continue with a policy of repression. Thus the Provisionals' actions not only stood in the way of winning unity of the working class and working people in Northern Ireland, but their actions were preventing the building of a mass movement in Britain which is essential to win democratic freedoms for the people in the North of Ireland.

Communist Policy

The programme of the Communist Party of Ireland, "A Democratic Solution" adopted at our 15th National Congress stated that continual repression by British governments would fail as in the past, to solve the "*Irish Question*". It also stated that blind acts of violence by "elitist" groups would not win national independence and unity for the Irish people. "The State terror inaugurated by the British," it said, "cannot be defeated by acts of counter-violence directed against civilians in their places of work, their centres of social gatherings and in other public places. Such acts only help to grievously divide the working people leading to a deepening of sectarianism, to the strengthening of that basis of division on which the British have been able to hold on to the country. Such acts must be unequivocally condemned as outrages on the peoples' cause."

At our 16th Congress in March 1975 we had this to say in the Political Resolution:

> "Since our last Congress, it has become more and more apparent that the Provisionals, far from learning the need for a united people's movement instead escalated their violent activities which have disastrously deepened, still more, the divisions in the ranks of the ordinary people.
>
> "The continuance of such activities has shown that they have deteriorated more and more into a nationalist, right-wing, anti-people's organisation. Their actions have enabled the Unionist right-wing, whose ultra organisations also engage in lethal violence, to consolidate their reactionary position, on a sectarian base, with many of the Protestant section of the working people, and have also helped to strengthen the position of some opportunistic SDLP leaders amongst the Catholic section of the working class. . . .
>
> "The actions of the Provisionals have contributed, as we warned in our 15th Congress, to increasing sectarian bitterness and division among the Irish working class. As well they have obstructed the necessary association of unity with the British working people in our common struggle against British imperialism. Their methods of struggle also provide the British with wide open opportunities (like the use of the SAS assassination squads and agents provocateurs) to utilise the violence to the benefit of the right-wing leadership of the British Army. In short, the activities of the Provisionals, far from weakening British imperialist rule in Ireland have in fact contributed to its strengthening. For this they must be seriously condemned as acting contrary to the interests of the Irish struggle against imperialism."

Bi-Partisan Policy Continues

Even after a second Westminster Election in 1974 and the return once again of 11 UUUC MPs to Westminster, including the extreme Right Wing Tory Powell, the Rees Administration in Northern Ireland continued with the old Tory policies which had failed to bring an end to the crisis there. They sought still to establish a Centerist Alliance, but by the continuation of repression and the denial of democratic rights they in fact not only strengthened the Right Wing in Northern Ireland, but its links with Right Wing Toryism and the National Front in Britain.

It was against such a background that they made another attempt to establish the Centerist Alliance as a viable force, through the medium of the Convention. In the build-up to this they issued two discussion papers which were attempts to show that Northern Ireland is dependent on Britain economically, but which were instead an indictment of

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British imperialism and Unionist Rule in Northern Ireland from 1921.

During Christmas the Provisionals established a cease-fire, which they re-introduced in January, despite the fact that no concessions were given to them. Even though the truce has held since that date the Rees "Direct Rule" team has continued with internment without trial of Provisionals. Indeed, it has now released all the Loyalist internees, in conditions where the Right Wing para-military organisations are carrying out bombings and assassinations. So the British Labour Government continues with the same repressive measures against the anti-Unionist population as the Tories.

It was noticeable that, when the Provisionals' truce was called, the UUUC leadership virulently opposed it. They did this because they were the men who had capitalised on violence, and whose power base depended on sectarian divisions being maintained amongst the working class.

On Tuesday, March 25, the British Prime Minister announced that the Northern Ireland electorate would go to the polling stations on May 1 to elect representatives to a "Constitutional Convention", saying: "As you know, the Convention will consist of 78 members elected to existing constituencies by the single transferable vote. It will have an initial life of six months. The government has the power to submit to referendum in Northern Ireland proposals emerging from the Convention, if it is helpful. The Convention is not an assembly nor a parliament: it will neither legislate nor administer."

The Convention has quite plainly no powers. It is a talking shop aimed as far as the British Government is concerned at keeping political opinion and movements busy in debate for six months, whilst the administration at Westminster works out ways and means of continuing British big business control of Northern Ireland. Mr. Wilson's reference to the fact that the British Government has the power "to submit to referendum in Northern Ireland proposals emerging from the Convention, if it is helpful" shows quite plainly that as far as Westminster is concerned they are only prepared to consider proposals that will ensure that a form of administration is reached in Northern Ireland that will satisfy first of all British big business interests, and second bring about some semblance of stability.

The Right Wing Strengthened

The Convention Election resulted in an overwhelming majority for the Right Wing UUUC, capturing 45 of the 78 seats. The Centerist forces—Faulknerite Unionists—were reduced to five seats from their former 12 in the Assembly. The SDLP lost two seats, thus returning 17, and Alliance held eight seats.

The prime responsibility for this Right Wing avalanche lies firmly on the shoulders of the Wilson Government, who despite the evidence that the Tory policies of Whitelaw had increased Right Wing strength went on to carry the same line. The evidence of two Westminster Elections, the fall of the Assembly, and the growing strength of the Right in Northern Ireland and its alignment with the most reactionary forces in Britain: the Monday Club, the National Front and the Sandhurst Generals, still has not yet brought the lesson home to the British Government that the only way to solve the crisis in Northern Ireland is by abandoning the bi-partisan approach and by bringing democratic rights to the people of the six counties.

Already in the Convention the Right Wing have shown that what they want is a return to the old type Stormont, only this time with the guarantee that no Westminster Government will prorogue such a Parliament. At the moment they are using their para-military organisations to blackmail the Labour Government into granting these demands, and to try to terrorise the democratic forces into submitting to their political aspirations. It is obvious that such an approach hardly augurs well for the future of the Convention, and it is extremely doubtful if it will last for even the six month period Wilson has marked out for it.

Certainly whilst the British Labour Government continues to pursue Tory policies of denying basic democratic rights to the working people of Northern Ireland, the right wing will be strengthened and make impossible an end to the crisis. Violence in such a situation will undoubtedly continue.

Towards a Bill of Rights

What is required immediately is a complete break with the bi-partisan approach and the immediate implementation of policies which will open up the way for the development of peaceful political organisation by the parties and mass movements of the working class and working people. This means (1) the unconditional release of all internees, (2) the repeal of the Emergency Provisions Act, (3) an end to harassment and intimidation of the working people by the British troops and their withdrawal from working class areas pending their complete withdrawal from Northern Ireland, (4) a Bill of Rights passed by the Westminster Government for the entire people of Northern Ireland.

Since the Civil Rights Movement first raised the demand for a Bill of Rights in 1969 the idea has been resisted both by Westminster and the UUUC because they realise that the winning of such legislation for Northern Ireland can supply the basis on which a united working class movement can be built. On the basis of a Bill of Rights a democratic Assembly Parliament can be created in Northern Ireland which will be open to the mass organisations

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of the people—the trade unions, the small farmers, tenants' and community associations—thus ensuring the active participation of the working people in their own affairs.

At one time only the Civil Rights Movement, the Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, the Communist Party and the Republican movement put forward the demand for a Bill of Rights. Now, the Faulknerite Unionists, the Alliance Party and other groups have come out in support of this demand. Indeed recently the UDA and the UUUC, raised the question that such a Bill was necessary. It is here that we must clearly define what are the essentials of such a Bill and emphasise that such a Bill must be passed, not by Stormont, but by the Westminster Parliament. The UUUC envisage such a Bill as an Act which will strengthen imperialism's hold on Northern Ireland—a Constitution Act. Whilst the essentials of a Bill of Rights has been spelled out in Act form by the Civil Rights movement—(1) guarantees the freedom for political thought and activity for all citizens in Northern Ireland; (2) guarantees the end of repressive laws, which breach common law, and contravene international human rights legislation, (3) guarantees the outlawing of discrimination against any citizen for reason of belief, religion, politics, sex, race or colour. (A Bill in Act form has been drawn up by the Legal Sub-Committee of NICRA and can be purchased from NICRA, 2 Marquis Street, Belfast, 1, 30p).

The passing of such a Bill by Westminster would end the present repression and open up the way to the isolation of the para-military groups, thereby creating conditions where the unity of the mass organisations of the working people—the trade unions, the small farmers', tenants' and community associations could be developed. In the struggle to break the bi-partisan policy of the present British Labour Government regarding Northern Ireland the British Labour movement has a key role to play, and indeed it is essential that it plays that role now! For as Marx said in his *Letter to Kugelmann*, November 29, 1869:

> "I have become more and more convinced—and the only question is to bring this conviction home to the English working class—that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it seperates its policy with regard to Ireland in the most decisive way from the policies of the ruling classes, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it with a free federal relationship. And indeed, this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading strings of the ruling classes because it must join in a common front against Ireland."

Bringing this warning sounded by Marx up to date, the late R. Palme Dutt in his *Notes of the Month* in July's *Labour Monthly* 1974 said: "Marx's warning against the fatal consequences for the British working class in a common front against Ireland', that is of accepting a bi-partisan policy on the relations of Britain with Ireland, in place of the joint struggle of the British and Irish peoples against British imperialist policy, remains more valid than ever today. . . ."

Referring to the current crisis for imperialist rule in Northern Ireland, Palme Dutt went on to say:

> "In this complex transitional situation there is danger that some sections of popular opinion in Britain, justly opposed to the official policy of seeking to impose a solution of military strength, and conscious of the bankruptcy of British imperialist policy in the present impasse, should fall into the trap of advocating as an alternative programme that the menace of the crisis and offensive of reaction in Northern Ireland, created by British imperialist policy, should be left for the Irish people to settle, in place of recognising the joint responsibility of the British and Irish working people to work together for a solution in the interests of both peoples. Such a policy of spurious 'non-intervention' in the crisis in Ireland, equivalent to a denial of the responsibility of the British people to fight the British imperialist policy in Ireland, would be as harmful to the true interests of the British working class as the parallel bi-partisan policy of alliance with Toryism for the maintenance of British military power and domination in Ireland."

So therefore it is not charity we ask when Irish Communists and democrats call for support from the British Labour and progressive movements to break the bi-partisan policy of the Wilson Government and to enact a Bill of Rights for the people of Northern Ireland. We share a common enemy—British imperialism. The weakest link in the chain of imperialism which holds both our peoples enslaved is today the undemocratic nature of the Northern Ireland statelet. If our labour and democratic forces in Northern Ireland and in Britain attack the British ruling class on this issue we can go forward to win not only a Bill of Rights for the working people of Northern Ireland, but to build the unity in policy and action of our working class and working people which is essential to achieve democracy, independence, peace and socialism.

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Document:

On the Distribution of Income and Wealth

(We print below the evidence presented by the Communist Party on June 6 to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth.)

The Communist Party welcomes the opportunity to present evidence to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. The Commission's terms of reference, to analyse the current position of, and past trends in, the distribution of personal income and wealth, give it the specific aim "to help to secure a fairer distribution of income and wealth in the community". Its report can help to clarify some of the issues raised by the government's commitment to "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families". The Communist Party has done and will do everything in its power to see a united demand from the labour movement and all progressives to ensure that this commitment is fully and rapidly honoured.

Trends in Distribution

A central problem in an analysis of trends in distribution in Britain this century is the discrepancy between change in the distribution of income and change (or, more correctly, lack of change) in the distribution of wealth. While it is claimed by some that incomes have become more dispersed since the inter-war period, the reverse is true of wealth—the ownership of the nation's resources has, if anything, become more concentrated than ever.

This pattern can only be understood in the light of wider social and economic developments. In particular, we must consider deep related changes in the structure and technical level of British industry and the gains won by the labour movement in modifying, to a limited extent, the share of working people in their own increasing output. On the other hand the entrenched resistance of the British ruling class has frustrated all democratic attacks on the source of its privileges—its control of the natural, industrial and financial resources of the country.

Some increase in mass spending power was indeed a condition for the very survival of Britain —even under the domination of monopoly capital —as an industrial nation. Sheer lack of mass consumption expenditure helped turn the depression of the 1930s into the most severe and prolonged economic crisis in British history. Again, the growth of new industries producing goods for mass consumption made some widening of the home market more necessary than ever.

Whatever changes there may have been in earlier post-war years towards a more equitable distribution of income, from around the late 1950s the trend has probably been towards greater inequality. The shallowness of those apologists for capitalism who exaggerated the extent of the advance, and accorded it the significance of a qualitatively different social order, has been revealed by the present crisis of British society. Meanwhile, the heightened struggle of working people to defend their real incomes and their share of the nation's product is the context for a more pressing challenge to the conditions under which production takes place: the concentration of the nation's wealth among a tiny fraction of its population and the domination of its economic life by a few hundred giant companies.

The Distribution of Wealth

The outstanding characteristic of wealth distribution this century is its stability—in spite of the wide range of apparently progressive tax changes which began with the reform of estate duty in 1909.

The only complete record available, based on death-duty returns, shows the share of personal wealth owned by the richest 1 per cent of the population falling from 69 per cent in 1911-13 to 42 per cent in 1960. Over the same period, however, the proportion of the nation's wealth represented by equity shares has greatly increased and the market value of these shares increasingly understates the net worth of the company sector. Further, increasingly successful avoidance has reduced estate duty to little more than a "voluntary tax". There is no doubt that in consequence these figures grossly underestimate the holdings of the rich. For instance, Michael Meacher has estimated that two-thirds of personal wealth escape recognition by the tax authorities altogether. Finally, much of the dispersion of wealth actually assessed for tax is simply the

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consequence of tax avoidance, with estates being put into "discretionary" trusts or seemingly split up within families to minimise tax liability. Certainly, the principal beneficiaries from the apparent fall in the share of the richest 1 per cent have been—the next richest 4 per cent. This is the basis of Professor Atkinson's conclusion that "what redistribution there has been is not between the rich and the poor, but between the very rich and the rich."

To understand the social and economic realities of wealth distribution, however, we must examine the way in which "wealth" as officially calculated is made up of different kinds of asset. This indicates that there has been *no reduction at all* in the concentration of ownership of the nation's productive resources—its land, buildings and industrial equipment—nor of the rent and profits derived from such possessions. Indeed, concentration here may well have increased. For the main trends behind such dispersion of "wealth" beyond the very rich as is reported in the statistics are more widespread home ownership and the growth of insurance-linked occupational pension schemes. Thus, according to Inland Revenue data, those with total wealth under £10,000 hold 68 per cent of it in the form of houses and insurance policies, only 3 per cent in shares, land and other realty. For those with over £200,000, the corresponding figures are 6.5 per cent in houses and insurance and 68 per cent in shares and real estate. According to J. R. S. Revell the richest 1 per cent of wealth holders own 81 per cent of all personally held stocks and shares in companies.

Thus there are two distinct tendencies to be considered, in spite of apologetic attempts to confuse them. On the one hand, limited numbers of better-paid working people have improved their economic position as regards homes and pensions. On the other hand, the wealth which confers economic power and permits the exploitation of other people's labour, that is, the ownership of the various production resources, has become, if anything, more concentrated.

Two points must be made. Firstly, the benefits of better housing and more adequate pensions are themselves very unequally distributed. Only about half of all employees, for instance, are covered by occupational pensions and the inadequacy of many of the existing schemes is notorious.

Secondly, it is nonsense to confuse these two tendencies, as is done by the propagandists of capitalism in order to portray the rosy fiction of a "property-owning democracy". The two trends cannot be offset one against the other.

The dispersion of insurance policies and occupational pension schemes has become a major channel for the concentration of money capital and its advance to monopolised industry. For instance, insurance companies and pension funds now hold some 21 per cent of quoted shares and in the official figures some of this wealth is attributed, via these institutions, to workers in pensionable employment. But these same investing institutions, together with the unit trusts, have become huge agglomerations of uncontrolled economic power, operating with a host of economic advantages created by the state. Their frequently declared "neutrality" notwithstanding, they form a bloc with their big business partners on every economic and political issue—often directly against the interests of those whose savings they control.

Meanwhile, the 47 per cent of quoted shares in personal hands remains as concentrated as ever.

One of the principal mechanisms of this perpetuated inequality remains inheritance, a conclusion we can reach even on the basis of the very limited information available in this obscure field. Professor Harbury's investigations, confined to the declared estates of fathers and sons at death, indicate at least no reduction in the importance of inheritance as a source of personal wealth. Widening of opportunities of access to wealth is simply a myth.

Finally, it must be stressed that the stability of wealth distribution is not spontaneous. Rather it has emerged in resistance to a battery of tax reforms with redistributive tendencies: higher estate duties, highly progressive income tax, high rates of company taxation, and so on. This raises the question of the power of *any* purely fiscal reform to bring about substantial equalisation.

The Distribution of Income

Even if it is correct, as some statisticians claim, that there has been a change in the distribution of income towards greater equality, certainly it is widely agreed that incomes are now more equally distributed than before the war. The forces behind this shift, however, are in question. R. M. Titmuss's thorough critique of the official data destroys the facile assumption that it was a simple consequence of the provisions of the "welfare state". A number of demographic, social and economic factors are involved. As Titmuss argues, some of these factors—such as the large-scale introduction of tax-free benefits in kind for company directors and top management—are "better expressed in the notation of statistical illusion than in the language of equality". There is considerable doubt, also, about the persistence of the ameliorative trend. Writing in 1967, R. J. Nicholson found that equalisation of in-

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comes came to an end in the mid-fifties, which he attributed to rapidly rising unearned incomes and the end of a decline in salary incomes relative to wages. Six years later Professor Atkinson confirms that no further gains by the poorer half of income recipients occurred in the 1960s. Between 1957 and 1967 the share of the poorest 60 per cent of recipients in total pre-tax income actually fell from 34 per cent to 33 per cent; their share in post-tax income fell from 37 per cent to 36 per cent. Although comparable data is no longer being made available, there is no reason to believe in any substantial change in this pattern since 1967. On the contrary, the impact of the economic crisis and much higher levels of unemployment is likely to be negative.

Once again, global figures on distribution conceal many of the realities of the situation. On the one hand, the concentration of income derived from wealth is extreme and highly stable. J. E. Meade reports that in 1959 the richest 10 per cent of income tax units received no less than 99 per cent of all income from wealth. On the other, the last ten years have brought an accumulation of evidence of the most widespread and persistent poverty. National Assistance and its successor Supplementary Benefit, introduced to deal with the few people for whom National Insurance provisions might prove inadequate, have become a way of life for millions of people amounting in 1973 to some 7 per cent of the British population. Beyond this we have the millions living below the niggardly subsistence level set by the Supplementary Benefits Commissioners. These were numbered by Professor Atkinson in 1965 as between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and 5 million people. Recent pension increases may have reduced this number, but this is the only measure—itself inadequate—which can be regarded as having had any serious impact on the problem. All other categories of poor people remain in substantially the same position: the relative position of low-paid workers, usually the victims of statutory or voluntary incomes policies, may well have deteriorated.

Meanwhile, government policy on the question of poverty is totally defeatist. The economic crisis, which bears most severely on the poor, is being made the excuse for an almost complete halt to any action in their favour. The declared aim of the government on social security is no more than to maintain the existing value of benefits and in many cases not even this is being achieved. On low pay, and particularly the question of equal pay for women, there is complete passivity at the very time when the most active intervention is required.

The general conclusion is a lack of any significant social advance in the field of income distribution for the last 20 years. Among the questions raised here is whether social welfare legislation on the pattern of the post-war years really has the redistributive effects which are so often attributed to it. The benefits to recipients have been greatly exaggerated in the mass media, while their financing—through the spurious contributory principle—has been the occasion for the widespread introduction of regressive taxes. The current reorganisation of National Insurance contributions shows this very clearly—$5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of income up to £69 a week will be paid, nothing on any income above that level.

Problems of Measurement and Presentation

We cannot take a definitive position on all the technical and conceptual problems which arise in a scientific study of income and wealth distribution. In general, however, the measures chosen should be as direct and unelaborate as possible:

(a) to ensure maximum accessibility to the evidence in the Commissions' report and to encourage the most widespread public discussion of the question of redistribution. It is imperative to avoid arbitrary prior manipulations of the data and the consequent pre-emption of democratic political decisions by "technical experts";

(b) to avoid obfuscation of the issues involved. Investigative techniques must be dictated by the nature of the phenomena under examination. The very real facts of privilege and poverty must be studied as they exist—not obscured by approaching them with rigid and abstract notions as to measurement and definition.

Where there is doubt about the principle or practicality of allowing for special factors such as non-pecuniary income the best estimates obtainable should be distinguished from the main findings: with a clear assessment of their reliability. Wholesale aggregation across categories of income or wealth whose inclusion raises questions of principle or serious doubts as to accuracy can only compromise the objectivity of the report.

We make the following comments on some of the specific problems which arise in this field of analysis.

1. **The accuracy and coverage of Inland Revenue Statistics.** Any investigation of income distribution is bound to make extensive use of Inland Revenue data, but their limitations must be kept in mind. It is alarming that in its preliminary discussion of this question the Commission makes no mention of tax evasion, a murky business but one on which the Inland Revenue must be able to present knowledgeable estimates. That the practice is widespread is well known

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and there is no justification for ignoring it. Nor should the Commission ignore the effect of purely manipulative tax avoidance, which is doubtless to minimise disparities in income. The Commission's report should include evidence on the distribution of tax allowances; for example, the highly inequitable distribution of allowances for insurance and mortgage repayments.

Non-taxable state transfers such as education grants and social security benefits are best considered as affecting post-tax rather than pre-tax incomes as there is little difference in principle between the impact on distribution of tax allowances and that of government grants.

Whether or not employers' superannuation contributions are included in personal income, the Commission should report on the highly inequitable distribution of these benefits.

2. **The Income Units.** We feel that the most practical unit for the assessment of distribution is the family. To use the individual would mean blurring the upper end of the distribution since high incomes are dispersed to avoid tax while the lower end would be confused by the inclusion of so many non-employed women. The formal income-tax unit has no clear social meaning. However, use of a family unit should not be permitted to mask the many severe cases of individual poverty and low wages within families. In particular, it is vital that the choice of unit does not prevent a clear report of the continuing inequalities to which women are subjected.

3. **The impact of government services on distribution.** While there is no doubt that the real benefits of services, such as education and medical care, provided by the state are distributed most inequitably, and in fact on a class basis, for example higher education or private access to National Health Service facilities, it is undesirable that post-tax income figures should be adjusted for such services, prior to a thorough examination of this issue. The same applies to many of the "unallocable" items of government expenditure which are usually classified as "collective consumption". The financing of administrative, defence and industrial policies contrary to the interests of the broad mass of the people in fact constitutes a transfer of income to the class whose dominance is perpetuated by such state interventions. What must be avoided is the sort of facile assumption often made in this area—for instance, in the right-wing tract by Polanyi and Wood, "How much Inequality"—that assets held by the public confer equal benefits on all citizens.

Similarly, with the impact of indirect taxes. Their distributional effects are only superficially neutral and the available evidence on the real incidence of indirect taxation should be reported. Although presently it might be confusing to include such data in overall measures of income, it is important to identify the many means by which the state increases inequalities of income and wealth. Prominent here are high levels of taxation on items of popular consumption.

4. **Impact of Inflation on Income Distribution.** There is no doubt that inflation has at different times different effects on the real spending power of various social groups. And it is practically impossible to adjust data on incomes for price changes in such a way as to compare both different incomes at the same date and changes in income over time in absolute terms; no such precise measure of real income exists. However, in any comparison of distribution over time, the estimated impact of relative price changes must be reported as movements in relative money incomes will often involve an element of compensation for the differential effect of price rises.

5. **Age differences etc. as a source of inequality.** It is often pointed out that many differences in measured income and wealth would be expected in the most egalitarian society, as a simple consequence of the heterogeneity of the population —its differences in occupation, age, region, and so on. This fact has been the basis of several questionable attempts to adjust measured distributions by allowing for age, in particular. If these adjustments are partial and involve arbitrary assumptions, the results can be highly tendentious. Professor Atkinson's studies show that the distribution of wealth within age-groups is much the same as for the population as a whole and that the importance of these effects has been exaggerated.

6. **The accuracy of wealth statistics.** The extent and nature of the omissions from the standard statistics on wealth—derived from estate duty returns—are currently the matter of considerable discussion. Although such data may of necessity form the basis of the report on wealth, it is advisable: firstly, that strenuous efforts be made to identify and quantify their deficiencies; secondly, that the use of such data be controlled by employing other measures of wealth distribution. The higher concentration of wealth found by those who use the alternative "investment income" approach is still a problem in the area which will remain obscure until a satisfactory reconciliation is arrived at.

What is Wealth?

One fundamental conceptual question, which it is absolutely necessary to clarify, is the definition of wealth. In the present propaganda campaign against the progressive measures of the Labour government, attempts have been made to disguise

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inequalities by employing an academic definition of wealth which is completely irrelevant to the political issues at stake. The right to a state pension, retirement annuities, putative individual shares in public assets—all have been capitalised and included in personal wealth. The mystifying concept of "human capital", which treats a man's ability to earn a wage, as if it were a security negotiable on the Stock Exchange, is the most extreme form of such apologetics: its sole function is to blur the quite concrete distinction between earned and unearned income.

This is a very easy way to resolve acute social contradictions: obviously, if one capitalises every source of income and treats the resulting sum as wealth, inequalities will be much reduced. The price is only that wealth as a social reality disappears from the analysis which becomes academic and meaningless.

As Marx showed, capital is not a "thing" but a social relation, which determines the economic and social subordination of the producers of wealth to an exploiting class which monopolises the means of production. A scientific investigation of wealth in our society must address itself to these social relations, with which, for instance, the distribution of durable consumer goods or of pension rights has nothing to do. Even owner-occupied houses here only represent personal wealth in the negative sense that they do not form landlords' capital. In our view, owner-occupied houses should be treated by the Commission as durable consumer goods, not as wealth.

A technocratic approach to this question—of which there are signs in the Commission's "Guidelines for Submitting Evidence"—can only vitiate the entire investigation, robbing their report of clarity and political relevance.

The Policies of the Labour Government

The Communist Party welcomed the redistributive measures envisaged in the programme adopted by the Labour Party in 1973. However, in spite of the claims made by the government, the measures actually implemented since Labour's return to office last year are absurdly inadequate to their declared purpose of a "fundamental shift" in the balance of wealth.

The removal of the maximum tax rate payable on investment income is perhaps the most important action in quantitative terms. But all this does is restore the situation to what it was before the last Tory administration.

Much the same can be said of the Capital Transfer Tax, which is in effect a long-overdue reform to close some of the biggest loopholes in death duties. The rates at which CTT is to be levied are even lower than those of the previous Estate Duty, simply to compensate wealthy people for the narrowing of their opportunities of wholesale tax avoidance. In addition, the government has been pressured into a large number of amendments which will seriously weaken the impact of the tax on the distribution of wealth. (Ironically, many of these concessions have the explicit aim of permitting control over "family" businesses to be passed intact from father to son—a strange way to bring about a shift of power in favour of working people.) CTT may well prove a somewhat more effective inheritance tax than Estate Duty, when it finally starts to take effect, but that is all that can be said for it.

The redistributive measure for which the Labour Cabinet has made most claims is the wealth tax—an innovation in Britain, though many Western European countries have had wealth taxes for many years. It is impossible to take seriously Denis Healey's assertion that by this tax inequalities will gradually be "eroded". The tax will only be paid by those with over £100,000, at rates which will raise each year a sum of the order of £200 million, a tiny fraction of the annual income which this group receives from its wealth (indeed, a small fraction of the average annual growth in the total amount of wealth owned by this group). Again, a whole range of vitiating concessions and exemptions are being contemplated by the government.

In sum, present policies on wealth are a classic example of the way in which past Labour governments have identified the interests of the dominant class in the existing social system with the needs of society. In the words of our programme, *The British Road to Socialism,*

> "Labour governments, like Tory governments, have in fact subordinated all their essential policies to the need of the great monopolies. . . . Their priority has been the interests of the rich . . . all for profit and little against poverty."

Conclusion

The present century has seen a series of attempts to change the gross inequalities which disfigure our society by new tax legislation. In spite of all the gains which have been made, the current distribution of wealth remains clear testimony that no advance has shaken the capitalist class relations which produce and reproduce these inequalities. On the side of income distribution, the millions of British people now living in poverty show how precarious is any easement of the situation won within the existing social system.

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To see the distribution of wealth only as one among a collection of social "problems" to be tackled by a simple set of reforms is, in the long run, to condemn any measures taken to futility. The fate of all the legislative attempts to modify the pattern of wealth ownership by reforming the tax structure demonstrates this. (Most recently, the attempt to deal with the abuse of so-called discretionary trusts by attributing their capital to the individuals who received income from them has been completely frustrated. The trusts simply used their "discretion" to see that none of their nominal beneficiaries was liable to tax on this capital.)

The rich are not a category of persons whose financial position can be manipulated at will by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. They form a class which uses its control of industry and finance, its domination of the apparatus of the state and its monopoly of the media of mass communication to resist and frustrate any move against its interests.

For this reason "to secure a fairer distribution of income in the community" is a goal which can only be achieved and consolidated as part of a general and conscious attack on the social structure which is reflected in the existing distribution. New taxes, at effective levels, on wealth and high incomes can play a part in this; as can a rigorous enforcement of existing tax legislation. But such measures must be combined with a wide extension of public ownership into the most important sectors of the economy, under democratic management which can start to sever the ruling class from the sources of its wealth and power. A further necessary condition is the democratisation of the state apparatus to ensure that the conservative inertia of the executive does not impede progress in the implementation of such a programme. (How much can be done about poverty, to take a very relevant example, through anti-democratic structures such as the Supplementary Benefits Commission?)

Finally, any genuine move towards equality in our community is bound to meet with bitter resistance by those who interests are threatened. (Even the mild measures on capital transfers and wealth taxation now being enacted by the Labour government have aroused sustained hostility from the press in a co-ordinated—and highly successful—campaign of reactionary propaganda.) In this inevitable conflict the government and Parliament can only act effectively in the context of a wide and active popular movement insistent on change, informed of the issues and initiating action to secure a more just and democratic society.

A clear and progressive report from the Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth would be a valuable stimulus in a wide debate among the British people, now questioning the inequalities of monopoly capitalist society, and seeking effective roads towards their abolition.

Consulted:

Flemming and Little—*Why We Need a Wealth Tax.*
Atkinson (ed.)—*Wealth Income and Inequality.*
Atkinson—*Unequal Shares.*
Kincaid—*Poverty and Equality in Britain.*
Titmuss—*Income Distribution and Social Change.*

Discussion Contributions on:

Notes on "Dialectics of Nature"

John Thompson

I make this further contribution to the discussion of "Dialectics of Nature" primarily to reply to the renewed criticisms[1-4] of Engels' work.

It has been argued[2] that the laws of dialectics presented in "Dialectics of Nature" impose Hegel's wildest speculations on to nature. As an idealist Hegel was able to systematise his ideas, demonstrating the necessity of his dialectical scheme. However, Engels, it is said, follows an ontological procedure; that is, he argues that a dialectic exists in nature because it exists in thought and then, not having a systematic construction significantly different from Hegel, merely illustrates his view with examples from contemporary science. Further, the anti-Engels case goes, the laws of dialectics, as purely objec-

[1] A. Coulter—*The Engels Paradox, Socialist Register,* 1971.

[2] A. Schmidt—*The Concept of Nature in Marx,* NLB.

[3] John Lewis—*The Marxism of Marx,* Lawrence & Wishart.

[4] Richard Gunn—*Marxism Today* (1973), 215.

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tive laws of substance rather than thought, contradict natural science which is "orientated towards formal logic"[2] and necessarily conceives matter undialectically. Any attempt to bring a dialectical materialist perspective will therefore damage natural science. Finally, it has even been suggested that the use of administrative methods against certain Soviet biologists and physicists under Stalin was a consequence of Engels' work.[1]

The writers who adopt these critical views will generally only accept the concept of a "dialectics of nature" in the limited sense of man's interaction with himself and his environment. The dialectic is seen as only arising in the interaction between subject and object. The form of a scientific investigation is considered to be distinct from its content and emphasis is then made on the dialectical *method* rather than the dialectic of the process studied.[4] It is then concluded that nature is not dialectical though our "knowledge of it" is.

The task of answering these critics is complicated for they raise some real problems whilst fabricating others. For example, it has never been asserted that materialist dialectics are "purely objective"; it *is* generally considered that they *contain* objective knowledge in the same sense that (specific) scientific theories do. On the other hand the Marxist theory of knowledge, knowledge of *both* specific and general phenomena, is not sufficiently developed yet to satisfactorily describe the difference between objective knowledge and false or inverted forms of consciousness, between science and ideology. The real problems require the development of dialectics, but this cannot be done until the fundamental mistakes made by Engels' critics are explained.

Dialectics as (1) General Laws of Nature or (2) Necessary Laws of Knowing Nature

Erecting the totally false concept of "purely objective laws" by some writers who wish to deny the existence of dialectics in nature is not simply the result of mischievous misrepresentation; it arises from their metaphysical view which separates the principles of method (logic) by which we order a rational investigation of nature and the theoretical and empirical knowledge produced in practice. A dialectical materialist approach insists that a knowledge *as a whole* represents or reflects objective existence. Whilst the logic, theory and empirical data that make up this knowledge can be partially differentiated, no aspect has absolute independence. The problem of the relationship between form and content is an old one (the example I have chosen with which to examine formal logic dates from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*), but one of the most extreme separation exercises ever was carried out by Immanuel Kant. For him, a number of statements concerning principles of logic and axioms of geometry were absolutely necessary but equally undemonstrable by experience whilst objective reality was completely different from our knowledge gained through experience. Hegel's aim was to overcome the conflict in Kant's ideas; ideas which have now been adopted by Engels' critics.

From a dialectical materialist standpoint the ultimate source of logic is practice[5] and categories of logic, though they may *conceivably* relate to restrictions (social, psychological or biological) in our modes of thinking, primarily reflect real distinctions in the external world. From this point of view the logic of materialist dialectics describes not only necessary laws of knowing nature but also general laws of nature.[6]

This position is not a dogma but a starting point for any materialist enquiry. For a Marxist to argue that an apparent aspect of the dialectics of nature arises from a restriction in our possible modes of thought, or a limitation (in principle) of our knowledge through an unavoidable subject/object interaction, a *detailed* description of the restriction or limitation must be given. A distinction should be made between a retreat from materialism, the rejection of the concept of dialectics in nature through an abstract idea, and an undogmatic appraisal[7] of scientific advances. The recognition of a subjective element distorting or restricting our reflection of reality is the first step in overcoming it.

[5] This assumption has been supported by the study of primitive peoples. See V. G. Childe—*Magic, Craftsmanship and Science*, Liverpool University Press, 1950.

[6] Lenin considers that materialist dialectics should be laws of cognition *and* of the objective world. "On the Question of Dialectics", *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 359.

[7] This "undogmatic appraisal", it must be admitted, is problematic. Engels, for example, was too ready to accept Spencer's biological interpretation of a priori principles for, as it turned out, twentieth-century physics showed that the axioms of Euclidian geometry only apply within a certain range and that men are sufficiently flexible to think out alternatives. Since then the consequences for dialectical materialism of relativistic and quantum physics have had to be worked out and this has been complicated by the positivistic outlook of some leading physicists. Currently, problems are being raised in the social sciences. For example, consider Piaget's opinion (*Psychology and Epistemology*, Chap. 4) that logico-mathematical knowledge is abstracted from action itself rather than objects. Whilst this conclusion is closely related to his research on child development, it does not indisputably follow from it. Similar conflicts arise in assessing Chomsky's linguistics.

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The Relation of Dialectics to More Restrictive Logics[8]

"Self-evident" axioms, "the principles for deduction and criteria of proof" and the "form" of language and mathematics have been variously taken to constitute "logic", that is formal logic.

Taken as "empirically unprovable pure laws of thought", these are the opposite pole of the empiricists' other idea; the pure untheoretical, preconceptual, formless observation. As Engels points out,[9] 18th-century materialism not only neglected the active role of thought, the theoretical content of all observation and experimentation, but also, conversely, the empirical basis of form (despite their sophistication the 20th-century logical positivists have not progressed in this respect).

Hegel[10] showed, in his works, just how *inept* it was to separate form from content and he also noted that this approach was a definite retreat from ancient metaphysics.

To the extent that "form" can be separated from "content" it is itself a distinct content at a higher level of generality (even though this general content is not usually made explicit). For example, consider the statement "A is A" which is essential for any formal logical scheme, describing the general property of things to have identity through time. Considered dialectically it is partially true. *Partially* true because everything is in a state of becoming. Partially *true* because nothing develops absolutely evenly, and every thing has a degree of separateness so that, with an appropriate frame of reference, the thing will be static relative to other processes.

Of course "A" could be said to represent an ideal thing, unchanging,[11] separate and possessing identity ("identity as separation from difference" —Hegel), but then it can be shown that such abstractions originally arose from men's practice. As Lenin put it, "the practical activity of man had to lead his consciousness to the repetition of various logical figures thousands of millions of times *in order that* these figures *could* obtain the significance of axioms".[12]

Despite its limitations,[13] formal logic has practical value. Dialectics necessarily makes our view of the world more accurate but less exact. That is, less exact in generality; precision is only reached in the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. Prior to the establishment of a science when, without theory, concrete analysis can hardly begin, prescientific ideas have in the past developed in a formal manner to give a temporary metaphysical framework, a "metaphysical scaffolding",[14] to the emerging science. An initial formal logic is an essential moment in a science's formation.

At the formation of a science a conjuncture of many elements takes place and Marxists, usually embattled against idealist historians, have tended to emphasise the primary elements (forces of production, relations of production, etc.). Clearly, however, any full history of the sciences will have to encompass the internal momentum of ideas, the heuristic within a partially autonomous intellectual tradition. Consider two examples of the initial role of a formal logic from the histories of the sciences.

It is now widely recognised[15] that during the formation of physical science there was a considerable continuity between the Scholastic Aristotelean tradition and the "New Sciences" of

[8] Modern formal logic and mathematics have been omitted from this paper, since, neglected by Marxists till recently, they need to be treated separately from the main issues raised here.

[9] *Dialectics of Nature,* 270, or *Anti-Duhring,* p. 435.

[10] This was the aspect of "Science of Logic" which most impressed Engels and Lenin. See *Science of Logic,* especially "Introduction to the general notion of logic".

[11] Once "at an instant" could be substituted for "unchanging", but this is only possible (without further restrictions) in a Newtonian space-time. Further, following Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, the energy of an object is absolutely uncertain at an instant.

[12] V. I. Lenin—*Philosophical Notebooks* (*Collected Works* 38), p. 190.

[13] Probably as a reaction to earlier dogmatic vulgar formulations some Marxists have tended to understate the limitations of formal logic. Maurice Cornforth has produced a scheme (*Marxism Today,* 1965, 330) which can be summarised thus:—

(a) laws of formal logic:—regulate our arguments without informing us of the objective world, necessarily true.
(b) empirical laws:—can be tested by nature, falsifiable.
(c) dialectical laws:—necessary laws informing us of the objective world.

(a) and (b) are a retreat before Popperism (which is just a brand of empiricism—see C. Gutzmore, *Marxism Today* (1972, p. 267). The only "advantage" of the scheme is that it provides completely distinct definitions of dialectics and formal logic.

[14] (Following from (13). Similarly Comrade Cornforth now makes a rigid distinction between formal logic and metaphysics (*The Open Philosophy and the Open Society,* Chapter 3). But surely formal logic, which isolates form from content, is a particular aspect of metaphysics. Lenin (*Collected Works* 38, 222) describes "the struggle of content with form" as an *example* of his dialectic element (9), "the transition of every determination, quality, feature, side, property into *every* other".

[15] e.g. S. Lilley, *Marxism Today* (1965) 270.

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Gallileo. The continuity is more specific than Gallileo's opposition to Aristotelean physics; it arises from the importance of the discussions on methodology and logic that took place at Padua. These discussions were abstract, formal and metaphysical, but they nevertheless provided a "basis" for Gallileo's work.

Similarly, I would suggest, historical materialism began through formal, metaphysical debate. Marx, it could be argued, had to initially reject Hegelian metaphysics using Hegelianism,[16] producing what could be called materialist Hegelianism which provided an initial metaphysical framework for his work. If a formal, metaphysical scaffolding is an essential moment in the emergence of a new science, it may also play a part in lesser developments. In particular we should not be surprised if the elaboration of the "dialectics of nature" begins with metaphysical formulations.

Towards a Dialectical Presentation of the Dialectics of Nature

Lenin criticises Plekhanov for taking the "identity of opposites" as the "sum total of examples" and he adds: "The same is true of Engels. But it is 'in the interests of popularisation'." This was written in 1915, long before the publication of *Dialectics of Nature* (1925, i.e. after Lenin's death), and it probably refers to *Anti-Duhring,* a polemical work written for a specific political purpose when Engels was halfway through studying the natural sciences. Lenin also writes that: "The correctness of this aspect of the content of dialectics [the identity of opposites—J. T.] must be tested by the history of science."

In the introduction to *Dialectics of Nature* Engels presents a brilliant outline of the history of science since the Scientific Revolution.

Guided by the principle that science as a human, and therefore social, activity cannot be seen in isolation, his outline presents the history of science in its social, political and economic context. He also demonstrates that as it progressed, scientific knowledge had become increasingly "dialectical". Astronomy, geology and biology had adopted an evolutionary perspective, whilst connections had been established across disciplines, breaking down absolute divisions (e.g. organic and inorganic chemistry).

Since Engels' work, dialectical materialism has been enriched, not only by the advances of natural science,[17] but also by the progress in writing the histories of the sciences.[18] The progress in the historiography of science is not just a progress in history *as such,* for without a dialectic between the histories of the sciences and the theory of what constitutes science we would inevitably produce the twin nonsenses of a history that gives equal weight to every historical "fact"[19] and a philosophy whose criteria of scientificity rules out *all* real science as unscientific.[20] Further progress does not follow a steady accumulation of more historical data with a continuous refinement of our understanding of science. The history and philosophy of science itself develops unevenly and it is therefore more important to identify the major problems than to give a detailed review. A problem will have two aspects; one appears as a problem in the histories of the sciences, the other as a problem in the theory of knowledge.

A Problem

Throughout his work from *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845) to *Marginal Notes on Wagner's Lehrbuch der politischen Okonomie* (1882), Marx stressed the practical side of knowing. The reality and objectivity of knowledge is first a practical question and, as Engels has put it, "it is in the measure that man has learned to change nature that his intelligence has increased". Modern natural science, relatively free from theology, which gains concrete objective knowledge, rather than elaborating a picture of nature that reflects the social system, is only possible because "the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production".

A problem arises since, along with a general increase in the division of labour, science separates from technology. The scientist operates on (theoretically and experimentally) concepts; the technologist *may* then use them in his manipulation of concrete objects. (The applied scientist operates on concepts with the needs of the technologist as an aim.) However, some theoretical knowledge is not concretised nor is it ever likely to be. Such knowledge does not have the certainty

[16] e.g. "But what then, is the Absolute Idea? It supersedes its own self again, if it does not want to traverse once more from the beginning the whole act of abstraction, and to satisfy itself by being a totality of abstractions on the self-comprehending abstraction. But abstraction comprehending itself as abstraction knows itself to be nothing: It must abandon itself—abandon abstraction—and so, it arrives at an entity which is its exact opposite—at *nature*". K. Marx—*Critique of Hegelian Philosophy* (1844).

[17] See especially Lenin's *The Recent Revolution in Natural Science* in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.*

[18] See especially J. D. Bernal—*Science in History.*

[19] e.g. L. Thorndike—*A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (eight volumes).

[20] This is the outcome of logical positivism. See *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap,* ed. P. A. Schilpp.

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of knowledge which is actively changing nature through men's practice, but should we dismiss it as unscientific or unreal?

The problem, for the histories of the sciences, is to understand how modern sciences secure their own internal heuristic which gives them a partial autonomy not only from ideology but also the practical problems of "revolutionising the instruments of production".[21]

The solution to these problems of scientificity are to be found in the wholeness of scientific knowledge.[22]

In general the scientificity of knowledge which is not directly and necessarily used in the process of controlling nature can be demonstrated by its place within the whole interconnected complex body of scientific knowledge. However, the nature of the interactions, the mutual dependencies, of the sciences (which do not negate their autonomy) can only be elucidated by detailed historical inquiry.

And how do these problems relate to the task of presenting the dialectics of nature dialectically?

Simply this, in writing a scientific history of science, a corpus of knowledge will be produced which embodies the dialectics of nature. In writing this history, whilst recognising the limitations of *Dialectics of Nature,* every Marxist can appreciate the importance of Engels' work in opening a research programme in materialist philosophy.

[21] Althusser has, of course, raised these points as part of a more general polemic. Unfortunately, the one-sided nature of his contribution, it seems to me, has inevitably led to theoreticist, and therefore idealist, results, especially from his followers. See, for example, *Theoretical Practice* 3 and 4 (1971).

[22] This is by no means a new solution. See "Theory and Practice from the Standpoint of Dialectical Materialism", N. Bukharin in *Science at the Cross Roads,* Kniga (1931).

Inflation and Marxist Theory

Barbara Ruhemann

Although the discussion on inflation has ranged over a very wide field, taking account of a very large number of complicating factors, there is still an aspect of the matter which has barely been touched upon: the differential incidence of inflation on the different classes of society. A hint that such a burden of inequality exists is contained in the data quoted by Pat Devine (*Marxism Today,* March 1974, p. 89, Tables 1 and 2). It can be deduced from them that while the GNP has since 1952 increased by about 2.9 per cent per annum, the increase for average real wages has only been 2.5 per cent, and for male manual workers only 1.5 per cent. This hint is not followed up, however, perhaps because the tables omit to mention profits.

For a more detailed picture of the actual distribution of this burden between the working class and the capitalist class we turn to the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* (HMSO) which regularly publishes indices for retail, output-of-industry, and wholesale prices, as well as summary tables of the Census of Production, conducted once every four or five years, which cover the major industries (except agriculture and distribution). It is therefore possible to study the effects of inflation by comparing the figures in terms of current, inflated prices with those if prices had remained constant since a given year, say 1954.

Looking at the summary tables one is at once struck by the fact that they break down production data in a way which makes it easy to apply Marx's theory to their analysis. They give gross output (GO), net output (NO) and wages and salaries (WS), and with that all the main elements of Marx's basic equation:

$$GO=(GO-NO)+WS+(NO-WS)$$

or: $C=\quad c\quad +(v+s)$

(*Capital,* Vol. III, p. 38)

That is, if we equate C with GO, the difference between NO and GO becomes c, the capital outlay on materials, fuels, wear and tear of machinery, etc. (termed by Marx "dead" labour) and NO the sum of v ("living" labour=WS) and s (unpaid surplus labour). The chief difference between the analysis of Marx and that of the census is that Marx would not have put wages and salaries into the same category.

For our present purpose this is not critical; indeed, from the political point of view there is some gain in avoiding such a division today, when white-collar workers are drawing closer to the working class, are joining trade unions and beginning to play quite a militant part in them. We shall just bear in mind that some salaried

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staffs are more in the class of directors, and that to that extent the figures are weighted somewhat against the working class.

The Summary Tables also give other data, such as the stock position, capital investment, numbers of the employees of the census industries and capital expenditure; these cannot be gone into here in any detail for want of space.[1] But they indicate that for their own purposes, capitalists are interested in obtaining a full factual guide to the state of their industries, and the Census-of-Production statistics are accordingly among the most carefully collected and most clearly presented statistics we have. Like all statistics, they have their limitations, and we must be careful not to overstretch the significance of a few decimals either way. That is only one of the reasons why the easiest way to grasp the meaning of these figures is in pictorial form, by means of graphs; provided, of course, that we pay attention to the figures at the sides of the graphs which give their scale. (All too often one can find in the learned literature on economics graphs which carry *no* scales; such graphs are mere meaningless doodles.)

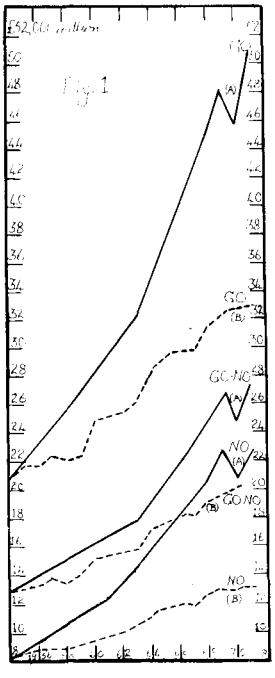
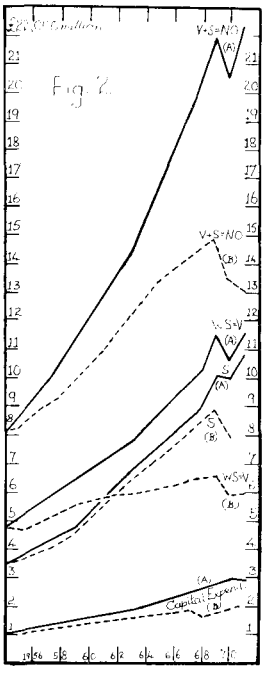


Fig. 1 shows the census data for GO, NO and GO—NO (A—continuous line) in current, inflated prices, and (B—broken line) in constant, 1954 prices. The latter are found by multiplying the 1954 value in each case with the Index of Production for the succeeding years. The difference between the A and B curves thus illustrate the extent of the inflation. GO, e.g., priced in 1971 at over £50,000m is in that year only worth less than £33,000m in 1954 prices, or only 65.5 per cent of its nominal value due to the inflation. Net output was worth only 58.8 per cent, but capital used up to produce it 72.8 per cent, i.e. substantially less depreciated than output.

[1] Nor can the effect of taxation be discussed in this brief statement.



Unequal Effects of Inflation

Fig. 2, on twice the scale of Fig. 1, shows the NO further broken down into its two main constituent portions, the wages of the workers and salaries of the staff of the census industries and the remainder, on the significance of which the tables do not enlighten us specifically, but which we know from Marx to be the surplus value created by the unpaid portion of the labour of the working class, which is appropriated by the capitalist class. The B curves, in value terms, are here calculated by the relevant price indices: by the Retail Price Index for the necessities of life consumed by the workers, by the Wholesale Price Index for the materials purchased by the capitalist class, and by the Index of Output Prices of Industry for the NO. Here we see even more sharply expressed the inequality of the effect of inflation: real wages are far below the inflated wages, which in 1971 were only able to purchase 56.3 per cent of what they would

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have bought in 1954, while capital goods were by comparison almost unaffected by inflation.

Even more striking is the progress in the intervening period in the deterioration of the workers' share of NO compared with that of the capitalists: in 1954 it was 58 per cent of NO; by 1962 the two shares had drawn equal in value, the division being 50:50, by 1971 the workers retained only 45.5 per cent of the NO, which, we recall, contains no contribution at all from the capitalist but has been created solely by the workers. This is the notorious "cake" which by the folklore of economics is supposed to be shared by the workers and the capitalists, although the latter have no shadow of a claim to any share of it justified by their own exertions. We also recall that in so far as any managerial efforts are concerned these are already recompensed in the share of salaries of WS.

We take note, however, of the fact that both in price and value terms gross and net outputs have both fairly steadily risen over the period through the efforts of the workers, at least until Heath started wrecking the economy. This point is marked in curves by a spectacular break in 1970, when output was drastically reduced through the reduction of manpower from 10,263,000 to 8,657,000 brought about by these wrecking tactics. If net output, nevertheless, rose in value from £1,967 per employee in 1968 to £2,388 in 1970 and £2,637 in 1971, this indicates that the workers were certainly not to blame for the breakdown. There must, of course, also have been minor ups and downs in earlier years not shown in our curves as the census is taken only at intervals; but nothing indicates such a sharp downturn as that in 1970.

The rise in gross and net output since 1954 means, of course, that general living standards and aspirations have risen, and let us make it quite clear again that the producers of these rising standards are the workers. But their share had not risen proportionately, let alone to such disproportionate heights as could justify apprehensions lest their wages become a real cause of inflation instead of pretext for the capitalists to raise prices. The object is to raise profits and has no connection with real wages on rare occasions exceeding productivity. At best, the workers may have recovered a little ground in 1971-72 after the sudden shocks administered by the Heath government from the moment it took power. The remarkable thing is rather that *at no time have the workers failed to produce not only the goods whose value repays the capitalist for all his outlays, including their own wages, they have never ceased to produce the surplus value which provides the capitalist class with rent, interest and profit.* Predictably, after the relentless government attacks on the pockets of the workers, record profits showered upon monopolists, multi-national firms, banks and land speculators in 1973. That was not manna from heaven: it was the very earthly harvest of the anti-working class policies disguised as anti-inflation policies, which in fact relied on inflationary measures for their success.

Wages and Inflation

In these circumstances to fail to apportion blame for the inflation instead of placing it squarely where it belongs, on the shoulders of the capitalist class and successive governments who either failed to prevent or actively encouraged price rises, is in fact to give credence to the lie of "wage inflation". But it is vital for the success of the working class struggle to expose this lie for what it is: a deliberate attempt to increase profits by curbing wage increases without risking an open confrontation because, alas, it is all the fault of the workers themselves! The fact remains that so long as a single £ is taken in profits, *it is impossible for wages to cause inflation.* Inflation is not a natural, inevitable phenomenon but only another name for price rises; but price rises occur as a result of human decisions, and at the points where these decisions are made, in the boardrooms of national and multi-national companies, in the CBI, and last but not least, in the seats of political power, there sit not the workers but the representatives of the capitalist class.

They are the beneficiaries of inflation, not its victims; they are creating it by raising prices, rents and interest rates, as they have created the whole private profit system. That system cannot be fought in the abstract; trade unionists and the Labour movement as a whole have to fight live capitalist bosses for every pound of surplus value they extract. *The fight against inflation is a necessary part of that struggle; it raises it to the political level.*

That is the *scientific* conclusion to be drawn from the facts of inflation, derived from Marx's scientific theory applied to the statistics of production today. The crux of his theory is in the equation quoted above (C=c+v+s), with wages (v) the price of labour power and (s) the surplus value created by it. Naturally, Marx spent his precious time primarily applying it to the capitalism of his own time, which was predominantly competitive, and only secondarily to a still speculative future. That does not mean it *cannot* be applied to modern, predominantly monopolistic capitalist: that is *our* job.

Concluded on page 231

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